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HOW CAN SURPRISE BE ACHIEVED TODAY AT  
THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL OF WAR?

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A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

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B.A., University of Kansas, 1974

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas  
1989

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AD-A214 196

## SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE

## REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188

1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION Unclassified			1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS		
2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY			3. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.		
2b. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE					
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)			5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)		
6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION U.S. Army Command and General Staff College		6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable) ATZL-SWD-GD	7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION		
6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) U.S. Army Command & General Staff College Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-6900			7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)		
8a. NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION		8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER		
8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)			10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS		
			PROGRAM ELEMENT NO.	PROJECT NO.	TASK NO.
			WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO.		
11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) How Can Surprise Be Achieved Today at the Operational Level of War					
12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) Lieutenant Colonel James Meredith					
13a. TYPE OF REPORT Master's Thesis		13b. TIME COVERED FROM 8-1988 TO 6-1989		14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) 1989 June 2	
				15. PAGE COUNT 101	
16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION					
17. COSATI CODES			18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)		
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP			
			Operational Level of War, Surprise, Cobra 1944, Manchuria 1945, Inchon 1950, Tet 1968, Czechoslovakia 1968, Sinai 1973, Afghanistan 1979		
19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)  See reverse side.					
20. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT. <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS			21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION Unclassified		
22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL			22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code)		22c. OFFICE SYMBOL

## 19. ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study is to determine how surprise can be achieved today at the operational level of war. Two supporting questions are answered as well. These are: What are the theoretical and historical foundations for the concept of surprise? And specifically, what are the ways, means, and effects (ends) of achieving surprise at the operational level of war?

The theory of surprise can be drawn from the writings of both classical and contemporary theorists. Leading military theorists who discuss the element of surprise include Sun Tzu, Carl von Clausewitz, Baron de Jomini, J.F.C. Fuller, B.H. Liddell Hart, M.M. Kiryan, V. YE. Savkin, Michael Handel and Edward Luttwak. These theorists provide assertions about the desirable effects (ends) of surprise and the various ways and means to achieve those effects.

Three historical case studies of campaigns and major operations undertaken during the period 1944 to 1950 are examined for evidence of these theoretical assertions. These case studies include Cobra (1944), Manchuria (1945), and Inchon (1950). Evidence found in these three historical case studies provides a tentative validation for the theoretical framework of surprise. This framework is then compared to four case studies of more contemporary campaigns and major operations undertaken during the period 1968 to 1979. These case studies include Tet (1968), Czechoslovakia (1968), Sinai (1973), and Afghanistan (1979).

Evidence resulting from the comparative analysis of the theoretical and historical framework, and modern case studies, supports the conclusion that surprise can be achieved today at the operational level of war by attacking at an unexpected time, place, and manner using the means of deception and speed. More specifically, attacks must be timed during a period when the defender is relaxed, in a direction that is inconvenient to the defender, using unexpected weapons and tactics, masking troop buildup through deception and using speed of movement along ground and air routes in order to concentrate attacking forces. Military forces, fighting outnumbered, who desire to achieve decisive victory must use surprise skillfully in order to achieve the operational advantage.

*surprise attacks military strategy military tactics*

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THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

Name of candidate: LTC James E. Meredith, Engineer

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency.

## ABSTRACT

HOW CAN SURPRISE BE ACHIEVED TODAY AT THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL OF WAR? A Comparative Analysis of Military Campaigns and Major Operations during the period 1944 to 1979 by LTC James E. Meredith, USA, 101 pages.

The primary purpose of this study is to determine how surprise can be achieved today at the operational level of war. Two supporting questions are answered as well. These are: What are the theoretical and historical foundations for the concept of surprise? And, specifically, what are the ways, means, and effects (ends) of achieving surprise at the operational level of war?

The theory of surprise can be drawn from the writings of both classical and contemporary theorists. Leading military theorists who discuss the element of surprise include Sun Tzu, Carl von Clausewitz, Baron de Jomini, J.F.C. Fuller, B.H. Liddell Hart, M.M. Kiryan, V. YE. Savkin, Michael Handel and Edward Luttwak. These theorists provide assertions about the desirable effects (ends) of surprise and the various ways and means to achieve those effects.

Three historical case studies of campaigns and major operations undertaken during the period 1944 to 1950 are examined for evidence of these theoretical assertions. These case studies include Cobra (1944), Manchuria (1945), and Inchon (1950). Evidence found in these three historical case studies provides a tentative validation for the theoretical framework of surprise. This framework is then compared to four case studies of more contemporary campaigns and major operations undertaken during the period 1968 to 1979. These case studies include Tet (1968), Czechoslovakia (1968), Sinai (1973), and Afghanistan (1979).

Evidence resulting from the comparative analysis of the theoretical and historical framework, and modern case studies, supports the conclusion that surprise can be achieved today at the operational level of war by attacking at an unexpected time, place, and manner using the means of deception and speed. More specifically, attacks must be timed during a period when the defender is relaxed, in a direction that is inconvenient to the defender, using unexpected weapons and tactics, masking troop buildup through deception and using speed of movement along ground and air routes in order to concentrate attacking forces. Military forces, fighting outnumbered, who desire to achieve decisive victory must use surprise skillfully in order to achieve the operational advantage.

## DEDICATION

To my father who fought in front-line combat in the European Theater during the Second World War; who personally lead his unit through the Siegfried Line, across the Remagen bridgehead, and fought village-by-village through northern Germany against enemy forces to achieve the effects of surprise.



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is a direct reflection of an extremely high yet achievable academic standard that was established and consistently enforced by my thesis committee--LTC Les Grau, COL Richard Swain, and MAJ(P) Dave Gross. Each committee member possesses a unique understanding of US and Soviet operational art and selflessly coached me to conduct scholarly research on the the complex principle of war--surprise.

During the formative stages of designing the structure for this thesis, three individuals contributed significantly in helping me to focus my thoughts on such a complicated study--Dr. Michael Handel, US Army War College, COL David Glantz, Soviet Army Studies Office, and COL Pat Hughes, School for Advanced Military Studies.

Never to be overlooked was the tremendous support I received from the staff of the Combined Arms Research Library--Mr. Dan Dorris, Mr. John Rogers, Mrs. Helen Rutledge, Mrs. Betty Bohannon, and Mrs. Pat Wells.

Finally, a special thanks to my wife, Dana, who continuously read, edited, critiqued, and most importantly provided me the encouragement to successfully complete this thesis.



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Surprise is more or less at the bottom of all military enterprises.<sup>1</sup>

GENERAL CARL von CLAUSEWITZ, 1831

Surprise should be regarded as the soul of every operation. It is the secret of victory and the key to success.<sup>2</sup>

GENERAL J.F.C. FULLER, 1925

Surprise is the key to victory.<sup>3</sup>

GENERAL WALDEMAR ERFURTH, 1943

#### STATEMENT AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this thesis is to determine how surprise can be achieved today at the operational level of war.

Surprise is defined as attacking unexpectedly.<sup>4</sup> The operational level of war is that level of activity between strategy and tactics in which available military resources are employed to attain strategic goals within a theater of

war through the conduct of campaigns and major operations.<sup>5</sup>

Waldemar Erfurth, a German general and military theorist, asserted that "the history of war shows that through the centuries almost all decisive victories have been preceded by surprise."<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Carl von Clausewitz wrote: "Surprise...becomes the means to gain superiority."<sup>7</sup> Operational commanders search constantly for effective force multipliers to gain an operational advantage over their enemy. Although, historically, surprise has proven to be one of the most effective force multipliers, today it appears to be more difficult to achieve due to modern surveillance means and the complexity of moving large forces covertly.

#### RESEARCH QUESTION

The primary question to be answered in this thesis is: How can surprise be achieved today at the operational level of war? Two supporting questions must be answered as well. These are: What are the theoretical and historical foundations for the concept of surprise? And, specifically, what are the ways, means, and effects of achieving surprise at the operational level of war? In order to answer the question how, this study includes both the ways and means of achieving surprise.

## DEFINITIONS

Strategic level of war: The highest level of war that employs the armed forces of a nation to secure the objectives of national policy by applying force or the threat of force.<sup>8</sup>

Tactical level of war: The lowest level of war in which smaller units use specific techniques to win battles and engagements which support operational objectives.<sup>9</sup>

Initial period of war: That period of time which elapses between the start of a war and completion by combatants of their mobilization, concentration and strategic deployment.<sup>10</sup>

## LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE

Research for this study included English language source materials or foreign sources translated into English.

Sources of research included the holdings of the Combined Arms Research Library(CARL) and the surrounding area library systems. This study considered material published prior to 31 March 1989. The scope of this study addresses conventional operations at the theater level. It does not include the use of nuclear weapons.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The basis for this research is a comparative analysis.

First, a review of writings from both classical and contemporary military theorists establishes a conceptual framework of ways and means to achieve surprise and anticipated effects which make the effort worthwhile. Then case studies are examined, one set covering the period 1944 to 1950 and another more contemporary set drawn from 1968 to 1979. These are compared with theoretical expectations. The results of this comparative analysis provide a basis from which conclusions can be drawn about how surprise can be achieved today at the operational level of war.

#### BRIEF BACKGROUND

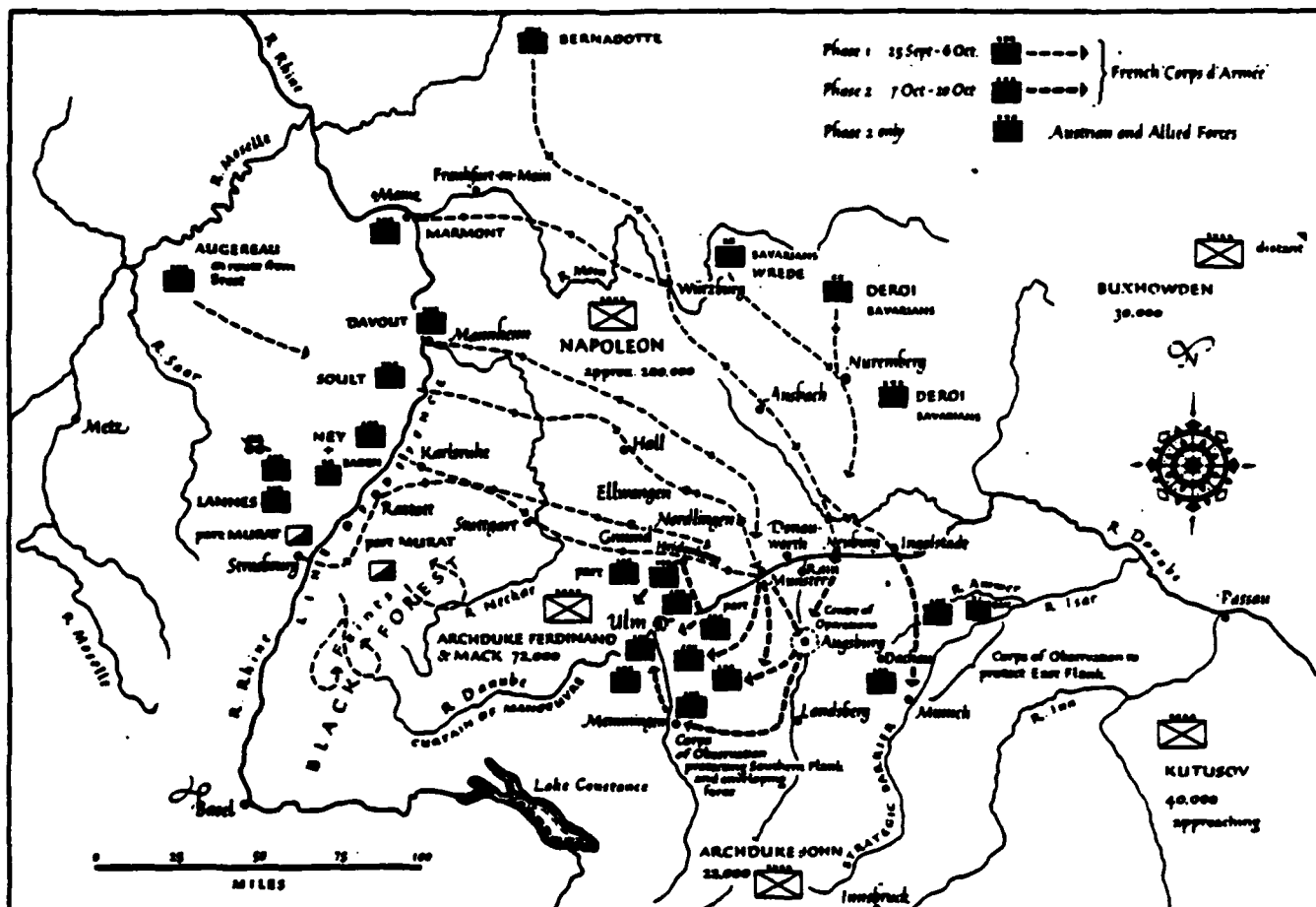
Historically, the ability to achieve decisive victory through the use of surprise has been a hallmark of great commanders. The Campaign of 1805 provides the classic example of Napoleon's army achieving surprise against enemy forces, first at Ulm, and then at Austerlitz.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1805, the Allied governments and military staffs of Russia and Austria had been developing plans for an offensive which they hoped would restore Europe to the territorial balance of 1789. Archduke Ferdinand of Austria with his able chief of staff, General Mack, was under orders to advance into Bavaria with a force of 70,000 men. His purpose was to discourage the Elector of Bavaria from overeager cooperation with the

French and, at the same time, cover a Russian approach from the east.<sup>11</sup> After he was joined by two Russian armies, the Archduke was to hand over command to Emperor Francis of Austria for a combined drive through Franconia, Swabia and the Black Forest toward Strasbourg.<sup>12</sup> Napoleon knew that the combined efforts of the Russian and Austrian armies would present him with an extremely dangerous situation.<sup>13</sup> His solution to this problem was for the French to strike first and seize the initiative on the Danube. His intent was to eliminate Archduke Ferdinand and General Mack before the Russians arrived, and then achieve decisive victory against the advancing Russians.<sup>14</sup>

During the major operation which ended at Ulm, Napoleon conducted a feint in the Black Forest to bait the Austrian forces while he moved secretly against their rear. By achieving surprise he hoped to gain a decisive victory against Ferdinand's army. Two weeks before contact was made with the Austrian forces, Napoleon received reports, first that General Mack with his 70,000 men had crossed the River Inn and was advancing on Munich, then that the Austrians had arrived at Ulm. Napoleon put his deception plan in effect by having Murat's cavalry make diversionary moves in the Black Forest, hoping to draw General Mack's forces further westward. As if hypnotized, General Mack took the bait and continued to move in the direction of the Black Forest.<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile, the main French forces swept wide along Mack's northern flank, hidden by the hills of the Black Forest and the Jura Mountains. The French forces continued to move swiftly toward General Mack's rear through Ettlingen, Louisburg, between Stuttgart and Ansbach, and on toward the Danube between Inglostadt and Donauworth.<sup>16</sup> The effective screening operations of Murat's cavalry coupled with the speed of movement maintained by the entire French army, confused the enemy.<sup>17</sup> General Mack, acting on a rumor that reinforced his conviction, announced to his men that the French were retreating westward for the Rhine River.<sup>18</sup> However, contrary to General Mack's conviction, the French continued to move against the Austrian forces at Ulm.<sup>19</sup> Although some Austrian forces retreated eastward, General Mack's main forces were surrounded and surprised by Napoleon's French army.<sup>20</sup> Outside the walls of Ulm, General Mack handed his sword and the 30,000 men of his command over to Napoleon. Archduke Ferdinand escaped after losing 18,000 men to the determined French pursuit.<sup>21</sup>



Map 1. Ulm, 25 September to 21 October, 1805

Following the effective destruction of Mack's army at Ulm, Napoleon was left with the problem of dealing with the approaching Russians and those Austrian forces who remained in the field. This required a second major operation, one that would achieve success on the field at Austerlitz.

After the Austrian defeat at Ulm, Napoleon advanced for Vienna. By late November he was caught again between two

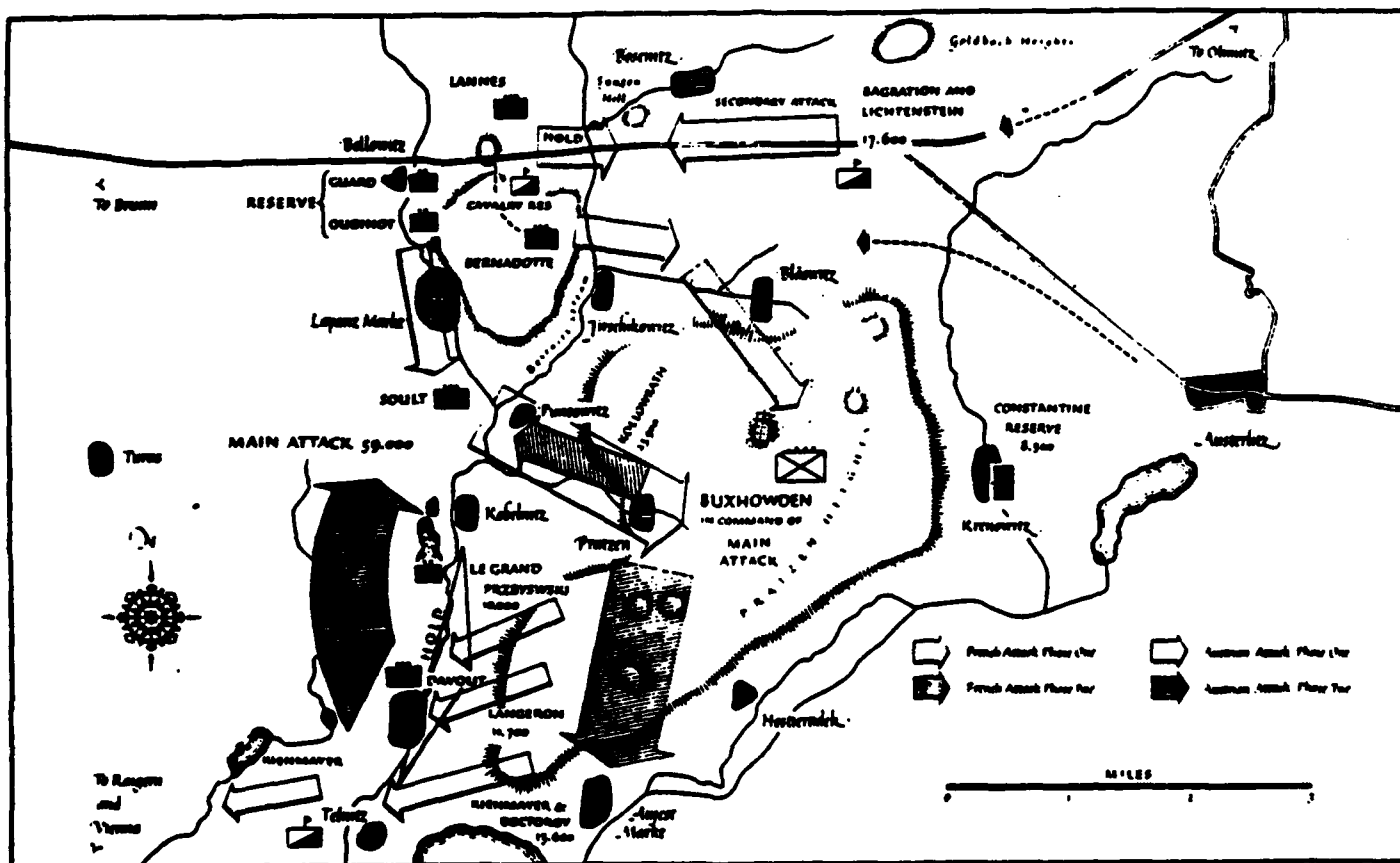


fires, the combined Russian-Austrian force at Olmutz and a major Austrian army enroute from Italy. To end the Campaign successfully Napoleon had to draw the Russo-Austrian force into battle before it was reinforced from Italy. He did this by advancing a third of his Army toward the enemy forces at Austerlitz. He hoped the enemy would believe the apparent vulnerability of this outnumbered force was an opportunity for their taking. Napoleon counted heavily on his ability to concentrate additional forces more rapidly than his enemies would expect in order to tip the balance in his favor before the battle began. The speed of disciplined marching by Davout's and Bernadotte's corps provided this ability.

Although Napoleon succeeded in drawing the enemy forward by risking temporary weakness, he still had to convince the enemy's high command that he was weak enough to be attacked.<sup>22</sup> Napoleon's objective was to make his Grande Armee to appear not so grand. He feigned weakness, first to draw the enemy into battle, then to lure the enemy to concentrate against his right flank in order to allow the French to break the enemy's center and fall on the Russian rear for a decisive victory.

To draw the enemy's main attack to his right, Napoleon deliberately extended the French right wing to make it weak, counting on the timely arrival of Davout's corps to

reinforce.<sup>23</sup> Napoleon shifted the attack on the Pratzen Heights slightly to the north to take advantage of the anticipated weakening of the Russian right center.<sup>24</sup> The Russian forces moved south to mass against the French right wing as Napoleon had hoped. Napoleon ordered Soult's corps, concealed behind a hill, to attack the center of the enemy line. The Russians were shaken by this sudden threat to their center.<sup>25</sup> Next, Napoleon ordered Bernadotte's corps to move on Blasowitz in support of Soult's attack.<sup>26</sup> By midday the battle was going decidedly in Napoleon's favor. The time was approaching for the final breaking of the Russian line, and the envelopment and destruction of at least the exposed left flank.<sup>27</sup> Napoleon ordered the entire French center to incline to its right.<sup>28</sup> The Russians gave up the Pratzen Heights and were driven back by the French into the frozen lakes and marshes to the south.<sup>29</sup> Napoleon had gained his decisive victory at Austerlitz and brought the Campaign of 1805 to a triumphant conclusion.<sup>30</sup>



Map 2. Austerlitz, 2 December, 1805

In the Ulm-Austerlitz Campaign of 1805, Napoleon achieved decisive victory through the use of surprise by employing both deception and speed of movement. At Ulm, he used Murat's cavalry in the Black Forest to lure General Mack's forces westward; meanwhile, his forces swept wide into General Mack's rear. At Austerlitz, Napoleon feigned weakness, first to draw the Russian forces forward and then

to weaken their center allowing him to attack and drive deep into their tactical rear. In each example, one operational, one tactical, Napoleon used deception in conjunction with speed of movement to envelop the enemy's flank or rear.<sup>31</sup>

Although the modern battlefield has become increasingly complex, commanders continue to be fascinated with the ability to gain decisive victory through the use of surprise. This thesis will examine the ability of contemporary commanders to achieve surprise at the operational level of war.

## CHAPTER 1 ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Carl von Clausewitz, quoted in, Waldemar Erfurth, Surprise (Harrisburg: Military Service Publishing Company, 1943), p. 31.

<sup>2</sup>J.F.C. Fuller, The Foundations of the Science of War (London: Hutchinson and Company, Ltd., 1925), p. 272.

<sup>3</sup>Erfurth, Surprise, p. 199.

<sup>4</sup>Frederick C. Mish, Editor-in-Chief, Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, Mass: Merriam-Webster, 1986), p. 1188.

<sup>5</sup>US Army Field Manual 100-5, Operations (Washington D. C.: Department of the Army, 1982), p. 2-3 [The 1982 field manual definition of the operational level of war was used because the levels of war are not defined in the current 1986 field manual].

<sup>6</sup>Erfurth, Surprise, p. 31.

<sup>7</sup>Carl von Clausewitz, On War (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 198.

<sup>8</sup>FM 100-5, Operations, p. 2-3 [The 1982 field manual definition of the strategic level of war was used because the levels of war are not defined in the current 1986 field manual].

<sup>9</sup>FM 100-5, Operations, p. 2-3 [The 1982 field manual definition of the tactical level of war was used because the levels of war are not defined in the current 1986 field manual].

<sup>10</sup>P. H. Vigor, Soviet Blitzkrieg Theory (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), p. 1.

<sup>11</sup>David G. Chandler, The Campaigns of Napoleon (New York: MacMillan, 1966), p. 382.

<sup>12</sup>Chandler, Campaigns of Napoleon, p. 383.

<sup>13</sup>Robert C. Pirro, "Sun Tzu's Art of War and Napoleon's Campaigns," Wargamer's Digest (December, 1982), p. 93.

- 14Chandler, Campaigns of Napoleon, p. 384.
- 15Chandler, Campaigns of Napoleon, p. 390.
- 16Chandler, Campaigns of Napoleon, p. 391.
- 17Chandler, Campaigns of Napoleon, p. 394.
- 18Chandler, Campaigns of Napoleon, p. 396.
- 19Chandler, Campaigns of Napoleon, p. 397.
- 20Chandler, Campaigns of Napoleon, p. 400.
- 21Pirro, "Sun Tzu and Napoleon," p. 94.
- 22Chandler, Campaigns of Napoleon, p. 409-410.
- 23Chandler, Campaigns of Napoleon, p. 413.
- 24Chandler, Campaigns of Napoleon, p. 424.
- 25Chandler, Campaigns of Napoleon, p. 425.
- 26Chandler, Campaigns of Napoleon, p. 426.
- 27Chandler, Campaigns of Napoleon, p. 428.
- 28Chandler, Campaigns of Napoleon, p. 428.
- 29Chandler, Campaigns of Napoleon, p. 431.
- 30Chandler, Campaigns of Napoleon, p. 432.
- 31Pirro, "Sun Tzu and Napoleon," p. 93.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE THEORY AND HISTORICAL PRACTICE OF SURPRISE

Chapter 1 defined surprise as attacking unexpectedly. The operational level of war was defined as the level of war between strategy and tactics that uses available military resources to attain strategic goals within a theater of war during campaigns and major operations. This chapter will provide a conceptual framework for understanding surprise developed from a comparative analysis of the theory and historical evidence of its achievement and use. A theory of surprise will be drawn from the writings of both classical and contemporary theorists. Factors derived from this theory will then be compared to the achievement of surprise seen in three historical case studies of campaigns and major operations undertaken during the period 1944 to 1950. Tentative conclusions concerning the validity of the historical model can then be drawn.

#### The Theory of Surprise

The collection of theoretical ideas that follows will serve to explain the effects of surprise and the various ways and means for an attacker to achieve it, and ultimately decisive victory, against an enemy.

### The Effects of Achieving Surprise

Military theorists discuss two desirable effects of achieving surprise. The first is physical dislocation. In other words, the enemy's physical dispositions are unbalanced just before he receives an attack from his opponent. Liddell Hart stated that "military history...points to the fact that in all the decisive campaigns the dislocation of the enemy's...balance has been the vital prelude to a successful attempt to overthrow. This dislocation has been produced by...the 'indirect approach,' intentional or fortuitous."<sup>1</sup> The use of the indirect approach allows friendly forces to strike enemy weaknesses causing the enemy to lose his physical balance and preempting his ability to respond. For example, in Chapter 1, Napoleon fixed the Austrian's attention toward the Black Forest and then conducted a wide flanking movement toward Ulm. By attacking the weak rear area of the Austrians, Napoleon preempted General Mack from massing his forces for an attack against the French Army.

The second effect of achieving surprise against the enemy is psychological paralysis. Again Liddell Hart proposes that "by using the indirect approach the enemy may not only lose his physical balance but he may lose his psychological balance as well."<sup>2</sup> Sun Tzu counseled attack against the opponent's psychological balance when he



recommended that the attacker "anger his general and confuse him. Pretend inferiority and encourage his arrogance. Keep him under a strain and wear him down."<sup>3</sup> Fuller felt that "a man whose mind is dominated by fear is a man in panic, consequently the ultimate end of surprise is to reduce our enemy to a condition of panic in which his morale is totally replaced by his instinct of self-preservation in its most irrational form."<sup>4</sup> US Army Doctrine states that "surprise delays enemy reactions, overloads and confuses his command and control...and induces psychological shock in soldiers and leaders."<sup>5</sup> According to Soviet military thought the disruptive nature of successful surprise attack has, as a consequence, a number of serious debilitating effects. First, a loss of time is caused by confusion which may, in turn, allow the attacker sufficient time to complete his specific mission. Secondly, disorganization, causing illogical and chaotic behavior by the side surprised, leads either to inactivity or unnecessary, futile actions. Thirdly, the side surprised will experience varying degrees of mental strain and exhaustion. Next, a large portion of forces may develop panic. And finally, there is a degradation of troop morale that undermines the confidence in received information and in the warning systems.<sup>6</sup>

Obviously these effects produce benefits for the attacker. Clausewitz points out that "surprise...is more or

less basic to all operations, for without it superiority at the decisive point is hardly conceivable. Surprise therefore becomes the means to gain superiority." He adds that "surprise...confuses the enemy and lowers his morale; many examples, great and small, show how this in turn multiplies the results."<sup>7</sup> Fuller emphasized that "without surprise in some form or another it is not possible to maintain the law of economy of force."<sup>8</sup> For the weaker force, surprise provides a combat power multiplier to attack and overcome a stronger enemy force.<sup>9</sup> According to John Gooch and Amos Perlmutter surprise is "exploited by the weaker of two states since a strong adversary is generally more relaxed, unsystematic, and arrogant in approaching conflict."<sup>10</sup>

The element of surprise is a vital ingredient available to commanders that allows them to gain the initiative and forces the enemy to be reactive.<sup>11</sup> According to Michael Handel, "the achievement of surprise rarely if ever fails [to lead to victory]. Historical military examples show two primary reasons. The enemy force misperceives the actions of the attacking force and/or the enemy force reacts too slowly...."<sup>12</sup> Thus, the theoretical consensus seems to support the idea that the desirable effects of achieving surprise are the creation of both physical dislocation and psychological paralysis. The attacker, as a consequence,

gains the superiority that allows him to achieve the operational advantage.

### The Ways to Achieve Surprise

Military theorists suggest three primary ways to achieve surprise against the enemy. The first of these ways is to attack at an unexpected time. Sun Tzu stated that one must "take advantage of the enemy's unpreparedness; attack him when he does not expect it."<sup>13</sup> Jomini, his nineteenth century successor, concerned himself with "the surprise of whole armies." But he warned that "before the invention of fire-arms, surprises were more easily effected than at present...because the reports of...firing are heard so great a distance...unless...the enemy is in the midst of the army before his presence is known...." Jomini continued this thought by saying, "in fact, to surprise an army it is not necessary to take it so entirely unawares...but it is sufficient to attack it...before preparations can be made to meet the attack."<sup>14</sup> Jomini's point is taken up by a contemporary strategic theorist, Richard Betts, who defines surprise in terms of the defender's unreadiness, caused by mistaken estimates of, for example, when the enemy would strike.<sup>15</sup> US Army doctrine indicates that a commander can achieve surprise "by doing the unexpected--striking the enemy earlier [before he can react]."<sup>16</sup> Edward Luttwak,

another contemporary thinker, proposes that attacking at an inconvenient time provides the attacker an advantage of an enemy who cannot react.<sup>17</sup> A leading Soviet military theorist, M.M. Kiryan, stated that surprise is achieved by carrying out powerful attacks not anticipated by the enemy with respect to timing.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, the Soviet Military Encyclopedia describes surprise (vnezapnost'), as one of the most important principles of military art, entailing the selection of (proper) timing.<sup>19</sup>

The second way to achieve surprise is to attack an enemy at an unexpected place by striking at a weak point or from an inconvenient direction. Sun Tzu said, "avoid the enemy's strength and strike his emptiness."<sup>20</sup> Liddell Hart wrote "what I consistently assailed for years was the orthodox military faith in the direct offensive, i.e., the frontal attack against an enemy firmly posted in position.... The method which I ceaselessly advocated was that of the 'indirect approach,' in any form that would achieve surprise...."<sup>21</sup>

In a somewhat different vein, Fuller pointed out that, "the reverse, or rear, attack is, in fact, the supreme surprise operation not only of small wars, but of great wars...as physical weapons hit fronts, so do moral weapons hit backs, and the most potent of moral 'weapons' is surprise."<sup>22</sup> Richard Betts again points out that surprise

is caused by a mistaken estimate of where the enemy would strike.<sup>23</sup> And Edward Luttwak feels that attacking from an inconvenient direction provides the advantage of an enemy who cannot react.<sup>24</sup> Again, the Soviet theorist, M.M. Kiryan, stated that surprise is achieved by carrying out powerful attacks not anticipated by the enemy with respect to place.<sup>25</sup> Finally, US Army doctrine indicates that a commander can achieve surprise by striking the enemy at an unlikely place.<sup>26</sup>

The third way to achieve surprise is to attack an enemy in an unexpected manner by using unexpected fighting techniques or unexpected weapons. Fuller and Liddell Hart's arguments for combining the effects of mechanization and aircraft provides one attempt to achieve this as does Guderian's practice in 1940.<sup>27</sup> Richard Betts states that surprise is caused by a mistaken estimate of how the attacker will strike.<sup>28</sup> US Army doctrine indicates that a commander can achieve surprise by attacking in greater force and using unexpected weapons.<sup>29</sup> Soviet Military thought states that surprise entails the selection of (proper) mode and manner.<sup>30</sup>

It would seem, therefore, a consensus of views exists which argues that the primary ways to achieve surprise are striking an enemy at an unexpected time, or place, or in an unexpected manner.

### The Means to Achieve Surprise

Military theorists discuss two primary means to achieve surprise. The first means is the use of deception. Sun Tzu's theory of warfare, written during the 4th Century B.C., is one of the first military treatises in written history to offer a plan for creating a strong military force based upon the timeless principles of warfare: maneuver, surprise, and flexibility of action.<sup>31</sup> Sun Tzu valued highly the principle of surprise. He professed that to achieve surprise through deception meant to wreak havoc with an opponent's plans and dispositions.<sup>32</sup> According to Sun Tzu, "all warfare is based on deception. Offer the enemy bait to lure him; feign disorder and strike."<sup>33</sup>

Clausewitz stated that surprise, as a means to gain superiority, is produced by secrecy. However, he believed, "surprise becomes more feasible the closer it occurs to the tactical realm, and more difficult, the more it approaches the higher levels of policy...."<sup>34</sup> In the past, surprise was achieved primarily at the tactical and grand tactical levels. Michael Handel states that with the advent of technology came the increased ability to achieve surprise at the higher levels of war.<sup>35</sup>

Surprise and deception are often used interchangeably. But what is deception, and how does it relate to surprise? Deception, according to John Gooch and Amos Perlmutter, is

"a conscious and rational effort deliberately to mislead an opponent."<sup>36</sup> Janice Gross Stein says deception is "designed to create false expectations...."<sup>37</sup> According to Barton Whaley, "deception is the distortion of perceived reality...to profess the false in the face of the real."<sup>38</sup> Michael Handel states "deception...assumes significance only when used as a means of achieving surprise." Deception is never an end in itself.<sup>39</sup> It exists solely to support military operations by facilitating the achievement of surprise. Therefore, Handel concludes "deception (or potential surprise) is a primary means of achieving surprise, the end."<sup>40</sup>

The second means to achieve surprise against an enemy is speed. Clausewitz stated that surprise as a means to gain superiority is produced by speed. According to Michael Handel, perhaps the most revolutionary change in warfare was the tremendous increase in mobility created, first by the introduction of the railway, and later by the internal combustion engine.<sup>41</sup> The beginning of the railroad era, shortly after Clausewitz's death, touched off the revolution in strategic mobility. The internal combustion engine further expanded the flexibility of movement and maneuver while reducing the dependence on railroad tracks for rapid mobility. The introduction of tracked vehicles and tanks by the end of the First World War created the possibility of

movement over difficult terrain. And finally, the development of air power added a third dimension, permitting movement across all natural barriers, in all directions, and in very short periods of time. In general, the existence of a variety of means of transportation made possible an accelerated pace of action and improved the speed of concentration and hence the likelihood of achieving a breakthrough to be followed by deep penetration against multiple diverse objectives into the adversary's rear. When employed in conjunction with the enormously increased capacity of conventional firepower, the efficient, rapid means of transportation multiplied the speed and power with which the attacker could focus effort at a selected point and catch the enemy completely off guard.<sup>42</sup>

How did Napoleon's successful use of surprise in the Campaign of 1805 relate to the theorists' ideas? Napoleon knew that the combined effort of the Russian and Austrian armies would present him with an extremely dangerous situation. His solution to this problem was for the French to strike first, achieve surprise and seize the initiative at Ulm. He then achieved decisive victory at Austerlitz against the advancing Russians. Napoleon achieved surprise by employing a combination of deception to manipulate the Allies and speed of movement to threaten their lines of communication or retreat.<sup>43</sup>



### The Practice of Surprise

The foregoing collection of theoretical ideas was presented to explain the effects (ends) of surprise and various ways and means for an attacker to achieve surprise and ultimately decisive victory against an enemy. The desirable effects, physical dislocation and psychological paralysis, are achieved by the skilled employment of--time, place, and manner of attack, deception and speed. These factors will now be examined in relation to three historical case studies of campaigns which occurred during the period 1944 to 1950 in order to compare the theoretical concept of surprise with historical evidence of its achievement and use.

#### COBRA 1944

The allied breakout from the Normandy Beachhead provides a first historical example of how surprise was achieved at the operational level of war through a combination of deception, the application of unprecedented mass by a known weapons system, and the selection of, and speed of movement along an unlikely avenue of approach.

On 6 June, 1944, the Allies made a cross-channel invasion of Normandy in northern France. The British landed on the left (east) and the Americans on the right (west) in

order to facilitate supply operations during later stages of the invasion. Eventually, reinforcements and materiel for the American forces would come directly from the United States through ports in Brittany on the west coast of France. British supplies would come from England through the Channel ports.

Notwithstanding that they would soon become the predominant force, this disposition of forces placed the US troops in the hedgerow country of the Cotentin peninsula. The broken terrain and thick hedges made it extremely difficult to initiate or sustain offensive operations with mechanized forces. In contrast, the British faced the Caen plain, a relatively flat region suitable not only for armored operations but also for the construction of airfields.<sup>44</sup>

Field Marshal Montgomery stated later that "my master plan for the land battle in Normandy was to draw the main enemy strength onto the British front on our eastern flank in order that we might the more easily break out on the western flank with the First American Army."<sup>45</sup> Omar Bradley agreed with Generals Eisenhower and Montgomery that a breakout would achieve two key objectives in the Battle for France. "The first," he stated, "was apparent from a glance at the map. Until we turned the Allied line east, our front would be facing south as it was when we came in

over the beaches. There was no better way to do it than to cartwheel to the left with Monty pivoting on the Channel. The second objective derived in large measure from the tyranny of logistics that overshadows any tactical movement in war. G-4 had repeatedly stressed the necessity for capturing the Brittany ports before the September gales knocked out our beaches and left us totally dependent upon Cherbourg."<sup>46</sup>

During the first two weeks ashore, the Allies counted heavily on two series of actions to overcome the enemy's defensive advantages. First, air power was to seal off the lodgement area and slow down enemy reinforcement. Second, a cover plan was created to pin down enemy forces in the Pas de Calais while the Allies defeated his forces in Normandy in detail. The cover plan involved a monumental scheme of deception. It had been built around known enemy agents, phony radio nets, and a mock-up invasion fleet. Its objective was to lure the enemy into believing that the Allies had collected a full-scale Army Group on the east coast of England for a main Channel assault through the Pas de Calais. The dummy headquarters for this fictitious assault was the 1st US Army Group. George Patton, whose arrival had been freely publicized in England, posed as the "assault" army commander of that Army Group.

In devising the OVERLORD cover plan against the Germans,

the Allies hoped for no more than a brief delay, a week or two at the most, until they had sufficient divisions ashore to secure the Normandy landing. Bradley later wrote that the enemy, "by the end of June still sat on the Pas de Calais, convinced that he had outfoxed us."<sup>47</sup>

Toward the end of June, Rommel had concentrated seven panzer divisions against Montgomery's British sector. One was all he could spare for the US front. Rommel's extreme sensitivity to the British threat at Caen resulted from his fear that Montgomery would break through there in a giant pincer movement calculated to join on the Seine with an Allied sea assault through the Pas de Calais. This assault against the Pas de Calais was the mission for which the Germans believed Patton waited with an Army Group in England.<sup>48</sup>

From the beginning of the Allied invasion, the Germans assembled and used their tanks in the Caen area, first of all because that terrain was the most advantageous for employing armor, and then because German doctrine dictated an armored counterblow as the best means of defeating the invasion. Whatever General Montgomery's intent, the result of German actions was that the British/Canadian Army was stalled before Caen. It was necessary then for the Americans to launch a major attack in the hedgerows, through terrain favoring the defense.<sup>49</sup>

Allied planners had not fully anticipated the difficulties the country presented to an invading army. The hedgerows in the US sector were walls of earth that enclosed small pastures which became virtual citadels when defended skillfully. Laced with twisted, toughly rooted trees, they made formidable barriers for tanks. German soldiers dug tunnels in the hedgerows to establish defensive positions in depth. Marshes, ditches, pools, and canals made movement difficult and dangerous. Eroded, sunken lanes were mined and covered by artillery or mortars.

There were other complications as well. Stormy weather in June and July handicapped Allied air forces. The constricted lodgement area lacked space for ground and air units waiting in the United States and England for employment in France. Supply channels were choked by a shortage of working ports.<sup>50</sup>

Bradley's first attempt at the breakout, made towards Coutances early in July, had failed. Then came Montgomery's Operation GOODWOOD in the Caen section. The Press regarded this as an attempt to breakout on the eastern flank. That operation also failed.<sup>51</sup>

How then did Bradley intend to turn the battle of hedgerows into a war of movement? "First," he wrote, "we must pick a soft point in the enemy's line; next, concentrate our forces against it. Then after smashing

through with a blow that would crush his front-line defenses, we would spill our mechanized columns through that gap before the enemy could recover his senses.... We had long ago concluded that the best point for breakout lay somewhere along the 16-mile line between St. Lo and Coutances."<sup>32</sup>

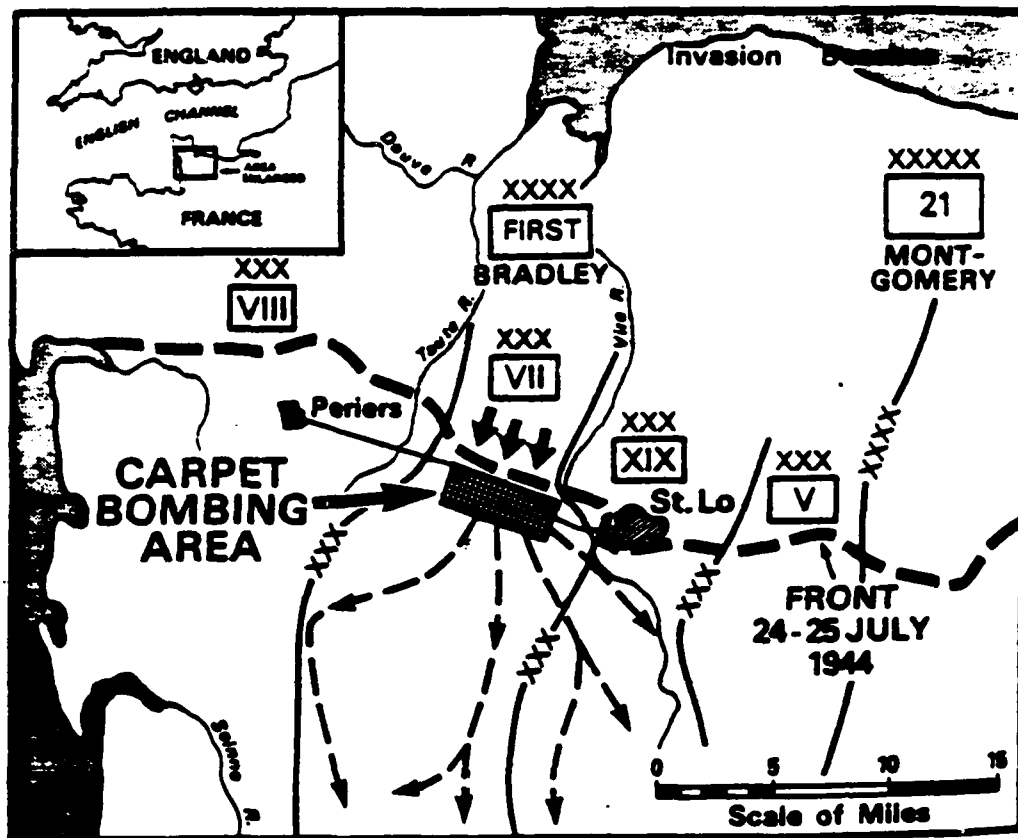
Although Montgomery's assault on Caen had failed, it had provided the Allies with the most convincing demonstration on the use of strategic air power in a tactical offensive. For several weeks prior to planning COBRA, Bradley had been hunting for an enemy concentration where heavy bombardment might be used to wipe out a division. "It was while searching for this target," Bradley stated, "that this thought occurred to me one day: Why not combine this mission with the breakout, first smash a division from the air, and then tramp right on through it."<sup>33</sup>

Bradley asked for a force of heavy bombers unprecedented in number, wielding devastating power. Their bombs would saturate a rectangular area approximately one mile by five miles, located just south of the St. Lo-Perriers road. To ensure a tremendous blast effect which would stun German defenders, bombing would be completed within one hour. To avoid cratering which could slow the attack, Bradley wanted only light bombs used.<sup>34</sup>

On 25 July, after a premature bombing on the previous

day, 2,500 American and British bombers began the planned "carpet bombing" operation near St. Lo dropping 4,200 tons of bombs.<sup>55</sup> Not only the bombardment on 25 July but also the premature bombing on 24 July terrified the Germans on the other side of the Periers-St. Lo Highway. The Germans thought that the Allies had developed a new weapon of overwhelming power.<sup>56</sup>

The first report to give German higher headquarters any picture of what had happened after the COBRA bombardment revealed that the Americans had penetrated the main line of defense. German commanders learned at 1600, 25 July, that American troops were south of the Periers-St. Lo Highway.<sup>57</sup> On the afternoon of 25 July, General Collins ordered his armor to attack the following morning. That decision led to the breakthrough that Cobra planners had hoped for. By late afternoon of 26 July, American forces had broken entirely through the German front.<sup>58</sup> Surprise was achieved at the operational level of war by using a combination of deception (the threat of an attack by a dummy army group into the Pas de Calais and British fixing attacks toward the Caen plain) and the unexpected method of carpet bombing. Once the Americans had broken through, they launched a rapid moving attack through the hedgerows toward terrain which favored maneuver warfare.



Map 3. Operation COBRA, 1944



## MANCHURIA 1945

A second historical example of surprise at the operational level can be found during the Soviet success in Manchuria in August 1945. This example shows how surprise could be achieved at the operational level of war through the combination of deception, speed of movement of large units, and the selection of an unlikely time and unlikely avenue of approach for a main attack.

Manchuria, by virtue of its geographical location, its natural resources, and its population, is an area of considerable strategic value. Its rich regions are both industrially and agriculturally important. Its geographical location gives it a dominant position in relation to China and the Soviet Far East. For this reason, the major powers of the region, China, Russia, and Japan, traditionally have been obsessed with possession of Manchuria.<sup>59</sup>

Soviet planning for the invasion of Manchuria began in March 1945, when combat operations against the Germans in the west were in their final phase. Shifting of men, materiel, and equipment to the Far East began in April. The High Command decided to move those units whose past experience suited them to the peculiarities of planned operations. Thus, a unit that fought in a fortified area on the western front was deployed to fight in a fortified

region of Manchuria. A unit with experience fighting in mountainous regions on the western front was deployed to engage Japanese forces in the mountainous areas of Manchuria.<sup>60</sup>

Among the most unpleasant realities faced by Soviet planners in contemplating operations into Manchuria was the fact that avenues of approach into the region were either obstructed by desert, "tank proof" mountains or by swamps and marshes.<sup>61</sup> Likewise, very few roads and railroads existed to aid in the achievement of surprise.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, the Japanese had built an extensive fortification system along anticipated avenues of approach. These resembled the Maginot Line.<sup>63</sup>

The movement of men and materiel eastward involved constant use of screening, cover, and secrecy. The Soviets relied heavily on night movement to deceive the Japanese about the Soviet redeployment. Use of assembly areas remote from the border masked attack intentions, but ultimately required units to move to the attack in August over a considerable distance. High ranking commanders moved into the theater under assumed names and wearing the rank of junior officers. While the sheer size of Soviet movements made them impossible to mask, deceptive measures obscured the scale of Soviet redeployments and caused the Japanese to underestimate the Soviet ability to attack. The Japanese

believed that the Soviets would be able to launch an attack only in the fall of 1945 or in the spring of 1946. However, the Japanese considered August as a slim possibility. By 25 July, Soviet force deployments to the Far East were virtually complete. The Soviets had only to set the date to start the operations.<sup>64</sup>

The Soviet High Command organized its forces in the Far East and Transbaikal regions into a unified command. The complexity of terrain in Manchuria, the vastness of the area of operations, and the necessity for a well-coordinated, well-timed operation required such unity. The resulting Far East theater headquarters under Marshal A. M. Vasilevsky was a structure unique to 1945.

The Transbaikal Front consisted of one tank army (6th Guards), four combined arms armies (53d, 39th, 17th, 36th), Soviet-Mongolian Cavalry-Mechanized Group, an air army (12th), and a small reserve. The 1st Far Eastern Front consisted of four combined arms armies (5th Guards, 1st Red Banner, 35th, and 25th), one mechanized corps (10th), an operational group (Chuguevsk), an air army (9th), and a reserve. The 2d Far Eastern Front included three combined armies (15th, 16th, 2d Red Banner), one separate rifle corps (5th), an operational group (Kuriles), an air army (10th), and a reserve. Thus, the total Soviet force available for operations against the Japanese included more than 1.5

million men, more than 26,000 artillery pieces, and 5,500 tanks and self-propelled guns.<sup>65</sup>

Opposing the Soviet Far East Command were the Japanese Kwantung Army and its Manchukuoan and Inner Mongolian auxiliaries. The Kwantung Army was a strong force whose name for years had evoked the respect of prospective foes. Formed in 1919 to defend Kwantung territory, and responsible for all of Manchuria after the Japanese seizure of the region in 1931, the Kwantung Army had grown into a formidable force of one million men by 1941. Most military authorities considered this army the most prestigious and powerful unit of the Japanese Army. The army's primary mission was to lend substance to the Manchukuoan government and to provide security from and perhaps offensive potential against the Soviet Union, should the need arise.

Before 9 August 1945, the Japanese Kwantung Army, commanded by General Yamada Otozo, consisted of two area armies or army groups (1st and 3d), and a separate combined army (4th), supported by one air army and the Sungarian Naval Flotilla. At the outbreak of hostilities, the Imperial High Command reassigned the 34th Army and Seventeenth Area Army to the Kwantung Army in Manchuria. Discounting forces in southern Korea, southern Sakhalin, and Kuriles, Japanese sources place the number of Japanese troops in Manchuria at 713,724. Thus, the overall ratio of

Soviet to Japanese forces with auxiliaries was 1.2:1. Counting only the Japanese in Manchuria proper, the ratio was 2.2:1. In tanks and artillery, however, the ratio was 4.8:1; and in aviation assets, about 2:1.<sup>66</sup>

Shortly after midnight on 9 August 1945, assault parties of Soviet troops crossed the Soviet-Manchurian border and attacked Japanese positions in Manchuria. This was the vanguard of a force of more than 1.5 million men that was to advance along multiple axes on a frontage of more than 4,400 kilometers. The Soviets traversed in its course virtually every type of terrain from deserts and swamps to rugged mountains.<sup>67</sup>

Perhaps the greatest surprise for the Japanese was the Soviet choice of timing for the attack. As early as May 1945, the Soviets had chosen mid-August, during the rainy season, as the most advantageous time for the campaign.<sup>68</sup> However, it was not merely with regard to date and time that the Soviets deceived the Japanese. The Soviets also surprised the Japanese with regard to the place at which the main attack would be delivered.<sup>69</sup> The Japanese totally discounted the possibility of a main attack through the Grand Khingan Mountains, which they considered impenetrable.<sup>70</sup>

The entire Soviet strategy for the Manchurian campaign depended on speed of movement to prevent the Japanese from

regrouping or consolidating their forces.<sup>71</sup> The Japanese, who relied heavily on limited railines for mobility, consistently reacted too slowly and remained overwhelmed and confused by Soviet maneuver and the speed of their offensive.<sup>72</sup>

The Soviet decision to attack with a two-front envelopment from both east and west contradicted Japanese expectations and deployments. In particular, the Soviet tendency to seek and achieve bypass of fortified positions also confused Japanese commanders. Soviet units crossed terrain the Japanese considered impassable. The Japanese could not parry Soviet attacks that occurred on virtually every possible axis of advance.<sup>73</sup>

The Soviet High Command projected that operations in Manchuria would last about one month and prepared accordingly.<sup>74</sup> However, the Soviets were able to use surprise to achieve success over the Japanese Kwantung Army and bring the war rapidly to an end in only eleven days.<sup>75</sup>

This case study provided an example of how surprise was achieved at the operational level of war by using a combination of deception to move Soviet forces secretly from their western front to the Soviet-Manchurian border, speed of movement of units through deserts, swamps, and rugged mountains, invasion during the rainy season in August, and a main attack through the Grand Khingan Mountains.



## INCHON 1950

The U.N. landing at Inchon provides a third historical case study in surprise at the operational level. This case study shows how surprise was achieved through a combination of timing, an amphibious assault landing at an unexpected location, speed in execution, and exploitation to upset the enemy's ability to respond effectively.

The North Koreans crossed the 38th Parallel on 25 June 1950, and opened a three year war for control of the Korean peninsula.<sup>76</sup> The North Korean forces were a pocket model of their Soviet counterpart, armed with T-34 tanks, heavy artillery, and attack aircraft.<sup>77</sup> The military forces in South Korea did not stop the North Korean offensive until early September. The United Nations forces, consisting largely of three scratch US Army divisions from Japan and the remnants of the Republic of Korea Army, barely held on to a perimeter around the port of Pusan at the southern tip of Korea.<sup>78</sup>

General Douglas MacArthur's strategic success in the Second World War rested squarely on his island-hopping campaign, mounting surprise amphibious operations to seize islands in the enemy rear.<sup>79</sup> From the first days of the Korean War, MacArthur had toyed with the idea of an invasion far behind enemy lines that would cut off the North Korean



forces deep in South Korea.<sup>80</sup> MacArthur selected Inchon as the landing site for one paramount reason: it was the port for the capital city of Seoul, which was a hub of communications.<sup>81</sup>

Inchon was the only plausible target for an amphibious envelopment. Kunsan was so close to the besieged Pusan perimeter that to make a landing there would be meaningless. Pyongyang's port was too far north. Posung-Myon, below Inchon on the west coast, offered inadequate scope for a breakout inland.<sup>82</sup> To reverse the ground war, MacArthur planned an amphibious deep envelopment or turning movement at Inchon and the recapture of the capital of Seoul, combined with a breakout from the Pusan perimeter.<sup>83</sup>

"The history of war," according to General MacArthur, "proves that nine-out-of-ten times an army has been destroyed because its supply lines have been cut off.... We shall land at Inchon, and I shall crush the [North Koreans]."<sup>84</sup> With the bulk of the North Korean Army concentrated at the Pusan perimeter, MacArthur was convinced "the enemy...has failed to prepare Inchon properly for defense...and will tend to ensure for me the element of surprise."<sup>85</sup>

The Navy's problem with Inchon was the tide. The average rise and fall of tides there were 20.7 feet, one of

the greatest in the world.<sup>86</sup> Only on three plausible dates-15 and 17 September and 11 October-would the tides be high enough to give the big landing craft three brief hours inshore before the coast became once more an impassable quagmire of mud.<sup>87</sup> On the invasion target day, the high tide would peak and then recede, leaving assault craft stranded on Inchon's sticky mudbanks. Thus, they would be easy targets for communist shore batteries. The Navy also disliked trying to put forces ashore in the heart of a city in which every wharf, warehouse, and building were potential strongpoints.

On the other hand, American intelligence considered that the enemy did not have the ability to reinforce the Inchon-Seoul area quickly. It held the view that only small rear area garrisons, line of communications units, and newly formed, poorly trained groups were scattered throughout Korea back of the combat zone around the Pusan perimeter.<sup>88</sup>

A co-ordinate part of MacArthur's Inchon plan was an attack by the Eighth Army north from its Pusan perimeter beachhead simultaneously with the X Corps landing. This action was intended to tie down all enemy forces committed against Eighth Army and prevent withdrawal from the south of major reinforcements for the North Korean units opposing X Corps in its landing area. The plan called for the Eighth

Army to break out of the Perimeter, drive northward, and join forces with X Corps.<sup>89</sup>

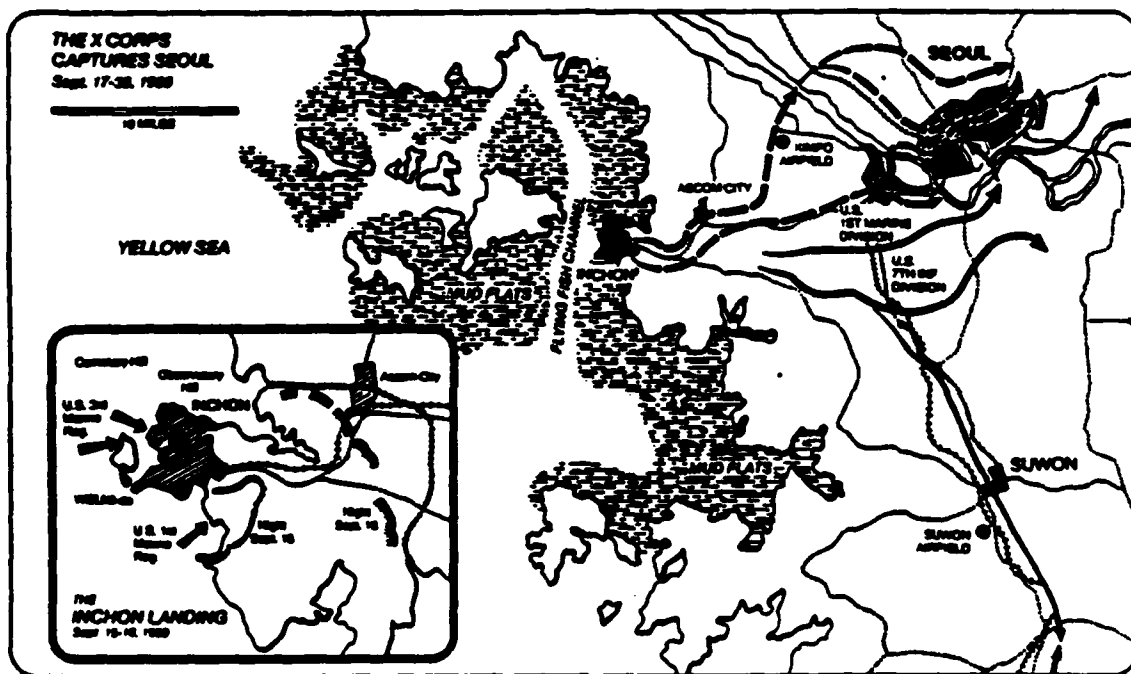
In what ranks as one of the most audacious gambles in military history, General MacArthur landed the entire X Corps at Inchon on 15 September 1950. As the X Corps was storming ashore at Inchon, the reorganized 8th Army (now with two corps, I and IX) began an attack designed to break out of the Pusan perimeter and link up with X Corps southeast of Inchon.

As MacArthur hoped, the Inchon landing caught the North Koreans off balance. The only North Korean forces present at Inchon were the new 18th Division plus a small number of security and local defense forces.<sup>90</sup> The North Korean determination to push the Eighth Army out of the Pusan perimeter clearly had taken precedence over defending Inchon. Now the North Koreans faced a two-front war, with a vastly superior American force sweeping across Korea to their rear.<sup>91</sup>

Within twenty-four hours of the main landing, the 1st Marine Division had secured the high ground east of Inchon, occupied an area sufficient to prevent enemy artillery fire on the landing and unloading area, and obtained a base of fire from which to mount the attack to seize Kimpo Airfield.<sup>92</sup> As General Almond's X Corps drove east, on 16 September in driving rain, General Walker's Eighth Army

launched its long-awaited breakout.<sup>93</sup>

Inland from Inchon, Kimpo Airfield was secured during the morning of 18 September. The capture on the fourth day of the 6,000-foot-long, 150-foot-wide, hard surfaced Kimpo runway gave U.N. Command one of its major objectives. It broadened greatly the capability of employing air power in the ensuing phases of the attack on Seoul. And more importantly, it provided the base for air operations seeking to disrupt supply of the North Korean Army.<sup>94</sup> The Inchon victory in an operation undertaken against the advice of almost every other officer involved, stands as MacArthur's finest hour of the Korean War.<sup>95</sup> In this case study surprise was achieved at the operational level of war by using a combination of an amphibious assault landing for a brief period of three hours during high tides, followed by a swiftly moving exploitation to threaten the North Koreans' extended supply lines.



Map 5. The Inchon Operation, 1950

## FINDINGS

The theoretical summary identified three ways to achieve surprise, striking an enemy at a "time," "place," or in a "manner" for which he is unprepared. To what extent is this hypothesis supported by the three case studies above? Two case studies (MANCHURIA and INCHON) involved the factor of "time" as a way of achieving the surprise of an enemy force. The Soviets surprised the Japanese in Manchuria by attacking in August during the rainy season. The Japanese expected the Soviets to attack later in the fall of 1945 or spring of 1946, and consequently, they were caught off balance. As a result they never succeeded in setting their defense of the western mountain barrier. The U.N. forces in Korea chose the unexpected time of 15 September for their amphibious assault landing at Inchon. The tides would be the deepest for that month for a brief period of only three hours to support landing craft in the harbor.

All three case studies (COBRA, MANCHURIA, INCHON) involved using the factors of "place" and "manner" of attack as ways of achieving surprise. In Normandy the Allies chose to break out on the right in more constrained terrain away from the most direct route to the Seine. To achieve breakout, they employed a new method of attack called carpet bombing (strategic bombing for tactical use). In Manchuria

the Soviets chose to conduct a two-pronged envelopment through the Gobi desert and the supposedly "tank-proof" Grand Khingan Mountains on the western border of Manchuria in combination with an advance along the expected route through the fortified region in the east. The U.N. forces in Korea maneuvered to threaten the extended supply lines of the North Korean forces by conducting an unexpected amphibious assault landing at the port of Inchon before advancing to Seoul.

According to theory, the means of achieving surprise include the use of "deception" and "speed." Two case studies (COBRA, MANCHURIA) involved the factor of deception and all three case studies (COBRA, MANCHURIA, INCHON) depended upon the use of speed to achieve surprise. The Allies in Normandy used the "deception" of the false invasion of Pas de Calais, deception enhanced consequent to the attack during Operation GOODWOOD. The "speed" of Bradley's 1st Army and especially Patton's 3d Army made good the penetration before the Germans could react to block it. The Soviets used deception by moving troops at night to redeploy from the western front to the Soviet Manchurian border. When Soviet forces attacked they used "speed of movement" both day and night into the Central Valley to preempt Japanese reaction. Finally U.N. forces in Korea used "speed of movement" of the X Corps through Inchon to

Seoul to achieve surprise and threaten the extended supply lines of the North Koreans.

Two primary benefits resulted from achieving surprise. The first benefit provided an increase in combat power for the attacker which in turn provided a second benefit of achieving the operational advantage. A review of all three case studies (COBRA, MANCHURIA, INCHON) shows that benefits were gained in all cases by achieving surprise. The Allies in Normandy successfully achieved a breakout and conducted a pursuit of German forces across Northern France. The Soviets in MANCHURIA successfully accomplished a two front envelopment of the Japanese into the Central Valley. And the U.N. forces in Korea achieved surprise at INCHON, cut North Korean supply lines, and broke out of the Pusan perimeter.



## SURPRISE AT THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL OF WAR

	<u>COBRA</u>	<u>MANCHURIA</u>	<u>INCHON</u>
<u>Ways</u>			
Time		X	X
Place	X	X	X
Manner	X	X	X
<u>Means</u>			
Deception	X	X	
Speed	X	X	X

Figure 1. Historical Case Study Comparison

Chapter 2 provided a comparative analysis of the theory and historical practice of surprise. Five factors were derived from the theory of surprise and compared to three historical case studies undertaken during the period 1944 to 1950. Analysis of the three historical case studies resulted with evidence as shown in Figure 1 that supported the use of these five factors to achieve the desirable

effects of surprise at the operational level of war.

Chapter 3 will analyze four modern case studies during the period 1968 to 1979 to determine how surprise can be achieved today at the operational level of war.

## CHAPTER 2 ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>B. H. Liddell Hart, quoted in, Brian Bond, Liddell Hart: A Study of His Military Thought (London: Cassell Publishers, 1977), p. 55.

<sup>2</sup>B. H. Liddell Hart, quoted in, Bond, Liddell Hart: A Study of His Military Thought, p. 56.

<sup>3</sup>Sun Tzu, The Art of War, Translated by Samuel B. Griffith (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 67-68.

<sup>4</sup>J.F.C. Fuller, The Foundations and Science of War (London: Hutchinson and Company, Limited, 1925), p. 273.

<sup>5</sup>US Army Field Manual 100-5, Operations (Washington D.C.: USGPO, 1986, ), p. 95.

<sup>6</sup>Jennie A. Stevens and Henry S. Marsh, "Surprise and Deception in Soviet Military Thought," Military Review (June, 1982), p. 62.

<sup>7</sup>Carl von Clausewitz, On War (Princeton: University Press, 1976), p. 198.

<sup>8</sup>Fuller, The Foundations and Science of War, p. 272.

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<sup>10</sup>Donald E. Neese, "Military Deception and Strategic Surprise by Gooch and Perlmutter," Military Review (May, 1984), p. 95.

<sup>11</sup>Interview with COL David M. Glantz, SASO, 4 January, 1988.

<sup>12</sup>Interview with Michael I. Handel, US Army War College, 12 February, 1988.

<sup>13</sup>Sun Tzu, The Art of War, p. 89.

<sup>14</sup>Baron Antione-Henri de Jomini, The Art of War (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977), p. 209.

<sup>15</sup>Richard K. Betts, Surprise Attack (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1982), p. 11.

- <sup>16</sup>Field Manual 100-5, Operations, p. 122.
- <sup>17</sup>Edward N. Luttwak, Strategy (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1987), p. 8.
- <sup>18</sup>M. M. Kiryan, The Elements of Surprise in Offensive Operations of the Great Patriotic War (Washington D. C.: Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 1987), p. 133.
- <sup>19</sup>Stevens and Marsh, "Surprise and Deception in Soviet Military Thought," p. 61
- <sup>20</sup>Sun Tzu, The Art of War, p. 89.
- <sup>21</sup>B. H. Liddell Hart quoted in, Bond, Liddell Hart, p. 58.
- <sup>22</sup>Fuller, The Foundations of the Science of War, pp. 275-276.
- <sup>23</sup>Betts, Surprise Attack, p. 11.
- <sup>24</sup>Luttwak, Strategy, p. 8.
- <sup>25</sup>Kiryan, Elements of Surprise, p. 133.
- <sup>26</sup>Field Manual 100-5, Operations, p. 122.
- <sup>27</sup>Bond, Liddell Hart, p. 58.
- <sup>28</sup>Betts, Surprise Attack, p. 11.
- <sup>29</sup>Field Manual 100-5, Operations, p. 122
- <sup>30</sup>Stevens and Marsh, "Surprise and Deception in Soviet Military Thought," p. 61.
- <sup>31</sup>Robert C. Pirro, "Sun Tzu's Art of War and Napoleon's Campaigns," Wargamer's Digest (December, 1982), p. 91.
- <sup>32</sup>Pirro, "Sun Tzu's Art of War and Napoleon's Campaigns," p. 92.
- <sup>33</sup>Sun Tzu, The Art of War, p. 66.
- <sup>34</sup>Clausewitz, On War, p. 198.

<sup>35</sup>Michael I. Handel, "Intelligence and the Problem of Strategic Surprise," The Journal of Strategic Studies (September, 1984), p. 231.

<sup>36</sup>John Gooch and Amos Perlmutter, editors, Military Deception and Strategic Surprise (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1982), p. 1.

<sup>37</sup>Gooch and Perlmutter, Military Deception and Strategic Surprise, p. 94.

<sup>38</sup>Gooch and Perlmutter, Military Deception and Strategic Surprise, p. 182.

<sup>39</sup>Michael I. Handel, "Strategic and Operational Deception in Historical Perspective," Intelligence and National Security (July, 1987), p. 1.

<sup>40</sup>Handel, "Strategic and Operational Deception in Historical Perspective," p. 42.

<sup>41</sup>Michael I. Handel, "Clausewitz and the Age of Technology," Clausewitz and Modern Strategy (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1986), p. 62.

<sup>42</sup>Handel, "Intelligence and the Problem of Strategic Surprise," p. 232.

<sup>43</sup>Pirro, "Sun Tzu's Art of War and Napoleon's Campaigns," p. 96.

<sup>44</sup>Martin Blumenson, "The Genesis of Monty's Master Plan," Army (January 1959), p. 28.

<sup>45</sup>Blumenson, "The Genesis of Monty's Master Plan," p. 27.

<sup>46</sup>Omar N. Bradley, A Soldier's Story (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1951) p. 317.

<sup>47</sup>Bradley, A Soldier's Story, p. 344-345.

<sup>48</sup>Bradley, A Soldier's Story, p. 326.

<sup>49</sup>Blumenson, "The Genesis of Monty's Master Plan," p. 29.

<sup>50</sup>John J. Sullivan, "The Botched Air Support of Operation COBRA, Parameters (March 1988), p. 97-98.

<sup>51</sup>Bernard L. Montgomery, The Memoirs of Field-Marshal The Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, K.G. (London: Collins, 1958), p. 257.

<sup>52</sup>Bradley, A Soldier's Story, p. 318.

<sup>53</sup>Bradley, A Soldier's Story, p. 339.

<sup>54</sup>Sullivan, "The Botched Air Support of Operation COBRA," p. 100.

<sup>55</sup>Martin Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1961), p. 234.

<sup>56</sup>Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, p. 239.

<sup>57</sup>Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, p. 247.

<sup>58</sup>Sullivan, "The Botched Air Support of Operation COBRA," p. 107.

<sup>59</sup>David M. Glantz, COL, August Storm: Soviet 1945 Strategic Offensive, No. 7 (Fort Leavenworth: USACGSC, 1983), p. 5-6.

<sup>60</sup>Glantz, Strategic Offensive, p. 1.

<sup>61</sup>David M. Glantz, COL, August Storm: Soviet Tactical and Operational Combat in Manchuria, 1945, No. 8. (Fort Leavenworth: USACGSC, 1983) p. 55.

<sup>62</sup>H.L. Eaton, The Soviet Invasion of Manchuria, 1945, An Analysis of the Element of Surprise (Fort Leavenworth: USACGSC, 1976), p. 98.

<sup>63</sup>Glantz, Tactical and Operational Combat, p. 102.

<sup>64</sup>Glantz, Strategic Offensive, p. 4.

<sup>65</sup>Glantz, Strategic Offensive, p. 37-40.

<sup>66</sup>Glantz, Strategic Offensive, p. 25-28.

<sup>67</sup>Glantz, Strategic Offensive, p. xviii.

<sup>68</sup>Glantz, Tactical and Operational Combat, p. 187.

<sup>69</sup>P.H. Vigor, Soviet Blitzkrieg Theory (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), p. 103.

<sup>70</sup>Glantz, Strategic Offensive, p. 156.

<sup>71</sup>Glantz, Strategic Offensive, p. 107.

<sup>72</sup>Gregory Fontenot, "The Promises of COBRA: The Reality of Manchuria," Military Review (September, 1985), p. 56.

<sup>73</sup>Glantz, Strategic Offensive, p. 156-157.

<sup>74</sup>Glantz, Strategic Offensive, p. 173.

<sup>75</sup>Glantz, Strategic Offensive, p. 153.

<sup>76</sup>Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, For The Common Defense (New York: The Free Press, 1984), p. 487.

<sup>77</sup>Millett and Maslowski, Common Defense, p. 485.

<sup>78</sup>Millett and Maslowski, Common Defense, p. 487.

<sup>79</sup>Joseph C. Goulden, Korea, The Untold Story of the War (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982), p. 184.

<sup>80</sup>David J. Ritchie, "Korea: The Forgotten War," Strategy and Tactics (May, 1987), p. 45.

<sup>81</sup>Roy E. Appleman, South to Naktong, North to the Yalu (June-November, 1950)(Washington D.C.: Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1960), p. 498.

<sup>82</sup>Max Hastings, The Korean War (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p. 100.

<sup>83</sup>Millett and Maslowski, Common Defense, p. 487.

<sup>84</sup>Appleman, South to Naktong, p. 488.

<sup>85</sup>Goulden, Korea, p. 195.

<sup>86</sup>Goulden, Korea, p. 193.

<sup>87</sup>Hastings, The Korean War, p. 100.

<sup>88</sup>Appleman, South to Naktong, p. 500.

- Appleman, South to Naktong, p. 495-496.
- Ritchie, "Korea: The Forgotten War," p. 45.
- Goulden, Korea, p. 218.
- Appleman, South to Naktong, p. 509.
- Hastings, The Korean War, p. 111.
- Appleman, South to Naktong, p. 511.
- Goulden, Korea, p. 232.



## CHAPTER 3

### THE MODERN PRACTICE OF SURPRISE

#### PREFACE

Chapter 2 listed the desirable results of achieving surprise. These were based on ideas discussed by well known military theorists who identified five factors for achieving surprise. These factors were then compared to historical case studies for tentative confirmation. Chapter 2 provided a theoretical overview of the concept of surprise and historical evidence of its achievement and utility, thus answering the two supporting thesis questions established in Chapter 1: What is the theoretical and historical foundation for the concept of surprise? and what are the ways, means, and effects of achieving surprise at the operational level of war? However, the primary thesis question remains unanswered. Therefore Chapter 3 will analyze four more contemporary case studies--TET (1968), CZECHOSLOVAKIA (1968), SINAI (1973), AFGHANISTAN (1978)--in order to determine whether and how surprise can be achieved today at the operational level of war.

#### TET 1968

The Tet Offensive, conducted by the communist forces in Vietnam in early 1968, required a simultaneous surprise

attack on nearly every city, town, and major military base throughout South Vietnam.<sup>1</sup> Vietnam was the front line of world conflict between two political and social systems; the one led by the Soviet Union and China who supported the communist North Vietnamese and indigenous South Vietnamese communist forces and, in opposition, the United States supporting the South Vietnamese forces. In 1968 the communist attackers hoped their adversaries would be scattered and stretched thin in the face of sudden assaults on every front, thus unable to mass and maneuver their powerful weaponry. The communist forces also hoped and planned that the government of South Vietnam would be paralyzed, its leaders assassinated, its military officers and men caught off duty and off guard during the Tet holiday and, in many cases, ready to turn their guns around and join the revolution. Planning and moving in secret, carrying supplies on bicycles or on their backs, without a single airplane or helicopter, they had organized the offensive throughout the country and moved silently to attack positions. With one surge, they would strike more than 100 cities and towns--the capital city of Saigon, 39 of the 44 provincial capitals, 71 district capitals. The many hundreds of specific targets would include the United States Embassy, the Presidential Palace and Joint General Staff headquarters in Saigon and headquarters of all four military

regions.<sup>2</sup>

Because of the magnitude of the attack, the great problem was how to achieve maximum impact through deception. The means were at hand to foster a climate of laxity and false security in the allied camp. Beginning in 1963, the Communist Command had proclaimed annual battlefield cease-fires for Christmas, New Year, and Tet, the oriental Lunar New Year. The Saigon government and United States Command followed suit beginning with Christmas 1965. The recurrent holiday truces quickly became accepted and expected in Vietnam as if they were commonplace in wars.<sup>3</sup> Also, the communists were well aware that 1968 was a presidential election year in the United States and the time when the American political system was most vulnerable.<sup>4</sup>

While the Tet firecrackers were exploding in the streets of the cities on the eve of the attack, the soldiers of the Liberation Army were gathered in the stillness of the forests outside.<sup>5</sup> Many of these signs were noted and reported, but few Americans in Vietnam believed that anything truly powerful, extensive, and traumatic was ahead. The very boldness of the plan generated disbelief. Militarily, it seemed fantastic. American officers were certain that communist forces could not seize and hold the cities. Considering the high costs and risks involved, the

idea of nationwide urban attacks for political and psychological gains seemed implausible. Outlandish claims of strength and achievement had been made before; perhaps this talk of imminent victory was a desperate attempt by the Communist Command to improve the sagging morale.<sup>6</sup> Military intelligence expected a big strike at Khe Sanh and in other border areas, but nationwide attacks against cities and towns were never considered a likely course of action.<sup>7</sup> The public at large had paid little or no attention to the rumbles of impending trouble in Vietnam which had cropped up since November. It had not been warned in any serious way by officials of the government. Most people were unprepared for this stunning evidence of communist resourcefulness, determination and power.<sup>8</sup> Well before Tet 1968 General Taber, chief of staff at USARV, was skeptical about any suggestions that the Viet Cong were so hard-pressed. He had seen the French repeatedly deceived by the Viet Minh into thinking that enemy forces were in trouble when in fact they were gearing up to take the offensive again. Thus he believed that the current lull clearly meant that Hanoi was preparing to launch a major offensive. However, HQ MACV did not regard such actions as highly probable until one week before Hanoi began its Tet offensive.<sup>9</sup> Of all the United States officials who were deeply affected by the Tet Offensive, General William C.

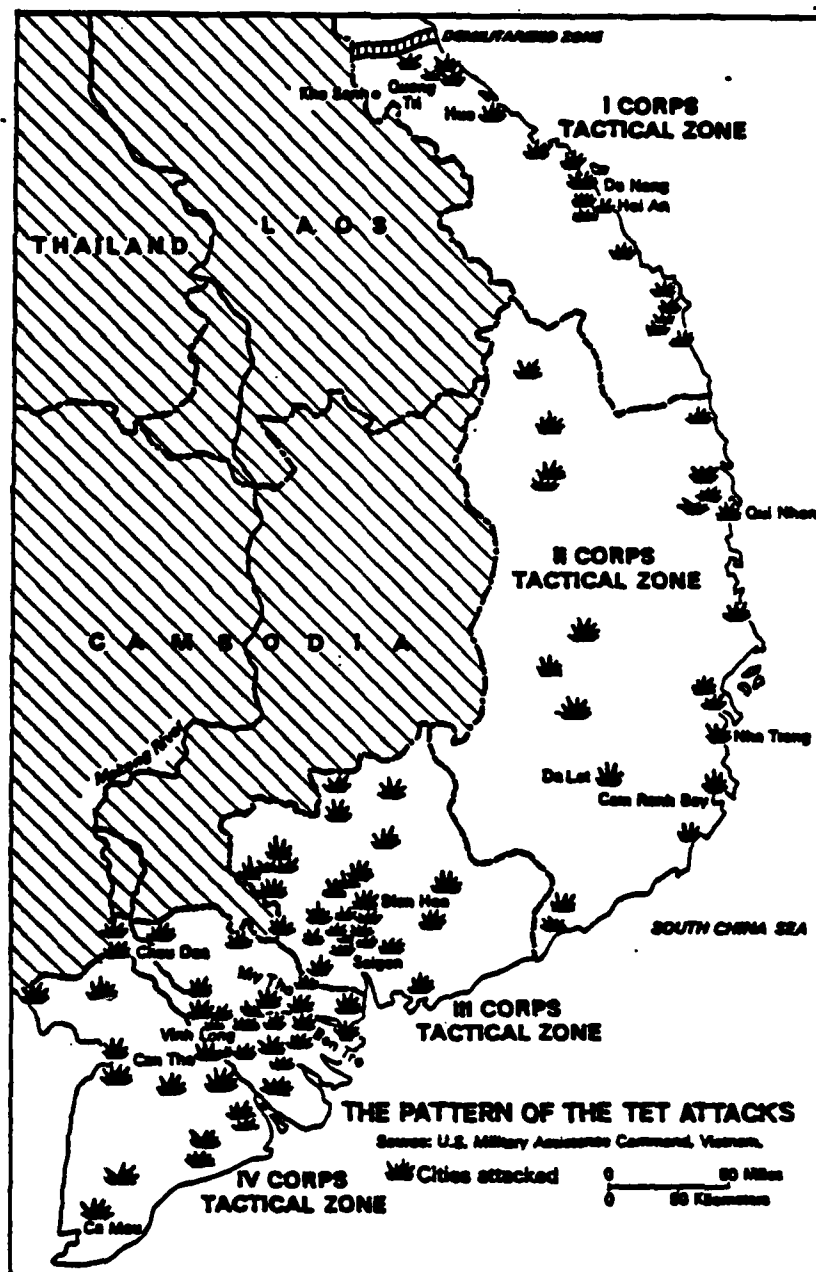
Westmoreland, Commander, MACV, was probably the least worried and the most invigorated by the turn of events. However, while Westmoreland was confident, Washington was deeply concerned.<sup>10</sup>

The communist commanders made a sizeable military commitment to the urban offensive. They not only utilized their local force battalions, but also surfaced key Vietcong cadres, exposing experienced, hard-to-replace guerrillas to heavy losses.<sup>11</sup> General Palmer, the Deputy Commander of MACV, stated "...so while we were expecting big trouble at the time of Tet, we were surprised by the timing (judging that it would come after Tet), by the nature of the enemy attacks aimed at the large urban centers, by the enemy's ability to launch coordinated, almost simultaneous major attacks country-wide, and by the total weight of the offensive."<sup>12</sup> The communist field commanders were unable to exploit either the surprise they achieved or local allied weakness. They failed to cripple the military, to hold the urban centers, or to shake apart the Thieu-Ky government.<sup>13</sup>

For the allies in February 1968, the enemy's performance was often muddled and lacked decisiveness. The North Vietnamese and Vietcong troops often backed away when faced with determined resistance.<sup>14</sup> Across the battle lines, a parallel wave of dismay was sweeping the communist camp.

Whispered conversations spread the news of what had been seen and heard in the cities, the names of well-known fighters and commanders who had been killed and those who were missing.<sup>15</sup>

On 18 February the Communist Command launched second wave attacks throughout the country, employing artillery and mortars and only a few ground attacks. This kept up the war of nerves at low cost and low risk and made new headlines around the world.<sup>16</sup> According to General Palmer, "At the time of the enemy Tet offensive in 1968, none of us realized the ultimate significance of this period in the war and the profound impact that it would have on the United States. Although it ended up as an allied military victory in Vietnam, at home it resulted in a stunning political and psychological defeat for the United States and the Republic of Vietnam."<sup>17</sup> USARV had failed to realize that this communist show of strength, although defeated, would undermine the US public's support of the war and lead to eventual withdrawal of US forces. This surprise attack was focused not only on the populated centers of Vietnam but also on the will of the American public. The physical battle was lost in the streets of Saigon, but the psychological battle was won on the campuses of the United States.



Map 6. The Tet Offensive, 1968

## CZECHOSLOVAKIA 1968

1968 provided another example of surprise at the operational level half the world away in eastern Europe. The satellite state of Czechoslovakia was undergoing a process of internal liberalization. A significant period of time elapsed between the first brush between Moscow and the Czechs in March 1968 and the advance across the border into Czechoslovakia of the troops of the Warsaw Pact in August of that same year. During this four month period the Kremlin made considerable public efforts apparently to reach a peaceful solution. They held two summit meetings (one in July and the other on 3 August) which were attended by General Secretary Brezhnev and most of the Politburo. Accords were signed, concessions were made, and by the end of the second meeting, the West and the Czechs believed that Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union had reconciled their differences.<sup>18</sup> The Czechs believed the Soviets promise that emerging political parties would share power with the autocratic Czech communist party and that eventually Czechoslovakia might leave the Warsaw Pact to become a neutral buffer state between East and West.<sup>19</sup>

The order to invade was given at a time when many observers believed that the danger had almost completely



vanished. The military exercise which the Warsaw Pact had been conducting along the borders of Czechoslovakia provided the excuse for bringing together a large number of troops. As the exercise ended, the troops appeared to be dispersing to their home stations. It was precisely at this moment, when Czech concern and world interest had begun to relax, that the Soviets struck.<sup>20</sup>

Thrusts into Czechoslovakia came from the north, the east and the south. Even if the Czech armed forces had wished to resist, they would have had to fight a war, not on two fronts, but three. Speed was of the essence. The quicker the Warsaw Pact forces could complete their military activities, the less likely it was that Western governments would order their military commanders to support the Czechs or that the Czechs themselves could respond. In fact the Soviets achieved victory in Czechoslovakia within less than 24 hours.<sup>21</sup> The Kremlin realized that the advance of Soviet forces into Czechoslovakia might make the NATO governments wonder whether Soviet forces would also invade their countries. The Kremlin ordered its ambassadors in those NATO countries to inform the governments that the Soviet forces would stop at the NATO frontiers and would not cross them, unless NATO took military action.<sup>22</sup>

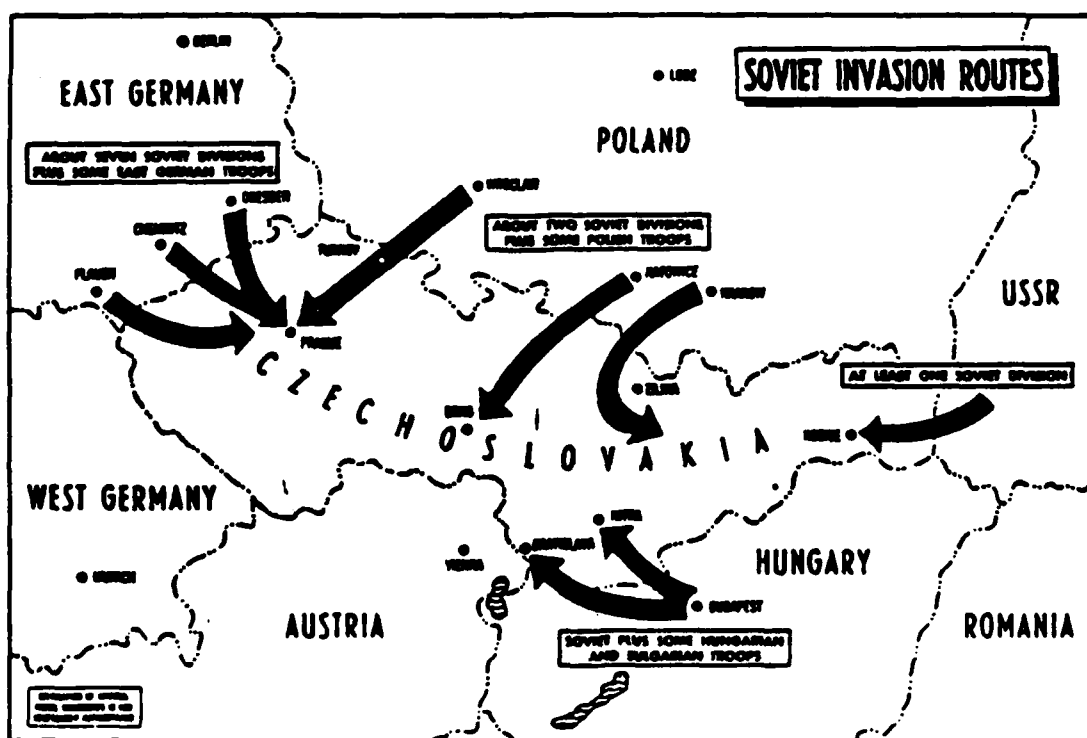
According to foreign reports, seven airborne landings were made into Czechoslovakia in addition to the ground

thrusts. The most important of these, obviously, was the one on Prague. It allowed the capital to be seized, and the potential leaders of Czech resistance to be arrested, all within an hour or two of the start of the campaign. Dubcek himself was arrested as result of this landing.<sup>23</sup> The invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact forces in the summer of 1968 was a classic example of military action that achieved its political objectives during the initial period of war.<sup>24</sup>

Two powers were surprised by the Soviets--NATO and the Czechoslovakians. First of all the Soviets had to act quickly without giving NATO time to respond. Effective Czechoslovakian resistance could have opened up the possibility of substantial military support by NATO countries. This obviously presented a very big problem for the Soviets. If NATO was taken by surprise, the NATO leadership would not have time to agree on a policy let alone put that policy into operation before the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia. Also, the Soviets guessed that NATO expected only the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany (GSFG) would conduct the actual invasion. If the GSFG moved in strength, NATO would think an invasion would be imminent; if they stayed in their barracks NATO would not expect an invasion. The Soviets supported these Western preconceptions by excluding most GSFG units for the

invasion.

The other power that was surprised by the Soviets was Czechoslovakia. To avoid detection by airport security personnel at Prague, the Soviets initially used Aeroflot civilian airliners. Once the civilian planes landed, the military planes followed. With Prague seized, the Soviets captured leaders of the Czech resistance immediately. The six other airborne landings were conducted to seize vital communications centers to ensure Czechoslovakian forces did not resist. In addition to surprising the NATO forces, the Soviets effectively surprised the Czechoslovakian forces.<sup>25</sup>



Map 7. The Czechoslovakian Invasion, 1968

### SINAI 1973

Perhaps the classic example of operational surprise in the modern era is that of Egypt over Israel in 1973. Its special value rests on the fact that Israel's own existence was clearly threatened and her military intelligence system proven inadequate. How did this happen? On 5 June 1967, Israel attacked Arab armies massed around its borders and in six days destroyed a great part of the enemy force which had threatened it, occupying the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank of the Jordan and the Golan Heights. This transformation from helpless victim to a brilliant victor brought about a revolutionary change of attitude in Israel. In contrast, the Egyptians conducted a complete re-evaluation of their military posture and called for renewed buildup to include seeking active support from the Soviets.<sup>26</sup>

Egypt initiated a war of attrition in March 1969. The conflict was launched with the purpose of creating a situation that could lead to crossing the Suez Canal in strength and reoccupation of the Sinai.<sup>27</sup> The Egyptian plan called for artillery bombardment, limited crossings by Egyptian commandos followed by extensive operations in depth across the Canal, and full-scale crossing operations with

the object of occupying sectors of the east bank of the Canal.<sup>28</sup> Although the first part of the Egyptian plan was carried out, the initiative passed to Israel and the War of Attrition soon became the war of counter-attrition.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless the Egyptians rebuilt their armed forces and, in 1973, planned to cross the Suez Canal and reoccupy the Sinai. They had three goals for the attack into the Sinai: surprise, thoroughness, and efficiency.<sup>30</sup> The Egyptians knew that the Israeli Sinai Defense Force consisted of a division with five brigades. They also knew that it took more than 24 hours to deploy the fifteen additional brigades to the Sinai. If the Egyptians could achieve surprise in crossing the Canal they would be faced initially with only 8,000 Israeli troops.<sup>31</sup>

The Egyptian army was viewed by the Israeli army as possessing both strengths and weaknesses. Israel had four advantages: air superiority, technological ability, a high standard of training, and guaranteed supplies from the United States. Israel suffered from three disadvantages: long lines of communication leading to multiple fronts, an inability to suffer heavy casualties because of its small population combined with an inability to fight a long war because of its impact on its economy and overconfidence stemming from victory in two previous wars.<sup>32</sup> Israel was also known to fear the possibility of a major two front war,

which would cause a division of limited Israeli resources.<sup>33</sup>

The Egyptians faced two major obstacles on the Sinai front. The first was the Suez Canal, 170 kilometers long and 180 meters wide at the narrowest point, and second, the Israeli Bar Lev Line, a system of fortifications and mobile defense reserves in depth.<sup>34</sup> LTG Shazly, Chief of Staff, Egyptian Armed Forces, felt it was impossible for Egypt to launch a large scale offensive to destroy the enemy concentrations in the Sinai. "All that our capabilities would permit was a limited attack. We could aim to cross the canal, destroy the Bar Lev Line and then take up a defensive posture. Any further, more aggressive moves would then need different equipment, different training, and a lot more preparation."<sup>35</sup> Three main factors drove LTG Shazly to the conclusion for a limited attack: the weakness of the Egyptian air force, the range limitation of Egyptian surface to air missiles, and the need to force the enemy to fight under unfavorable conditions.<sup>36</sup>

The Egyptians planned their attack for 6 October because they believed the Israeli's would assume Arab soldiers would not engage in military operations during the fast month of Ramadan. The sixth of October was a moonlit night with the most favorable tide in the Suez Canal. It was also the Jewish fast day of Yom Kippur when Israeli alertness would

be at its lowest level.<sup>37</sup> The Egyptian deception plan was based on numerous routine mobilizations. Every autumn since 1968 the Egyptian armed forces had held strategic exercises on an increasingly elaborate scale. In 1973 reservists had been mobilized 22 times--from three days to two weeks.<sup>38</sup> In addition to the routine of mobilization, the main combat units stationed by the canal made no aggressive moves. Five infantry divisions were deployed in defensive formation over a sector 10-12 miles wide. The Egyptians were expecting the Israeli's to conclude after four years of observation that these divisions were not massing for an assault.<sup>39</sup>

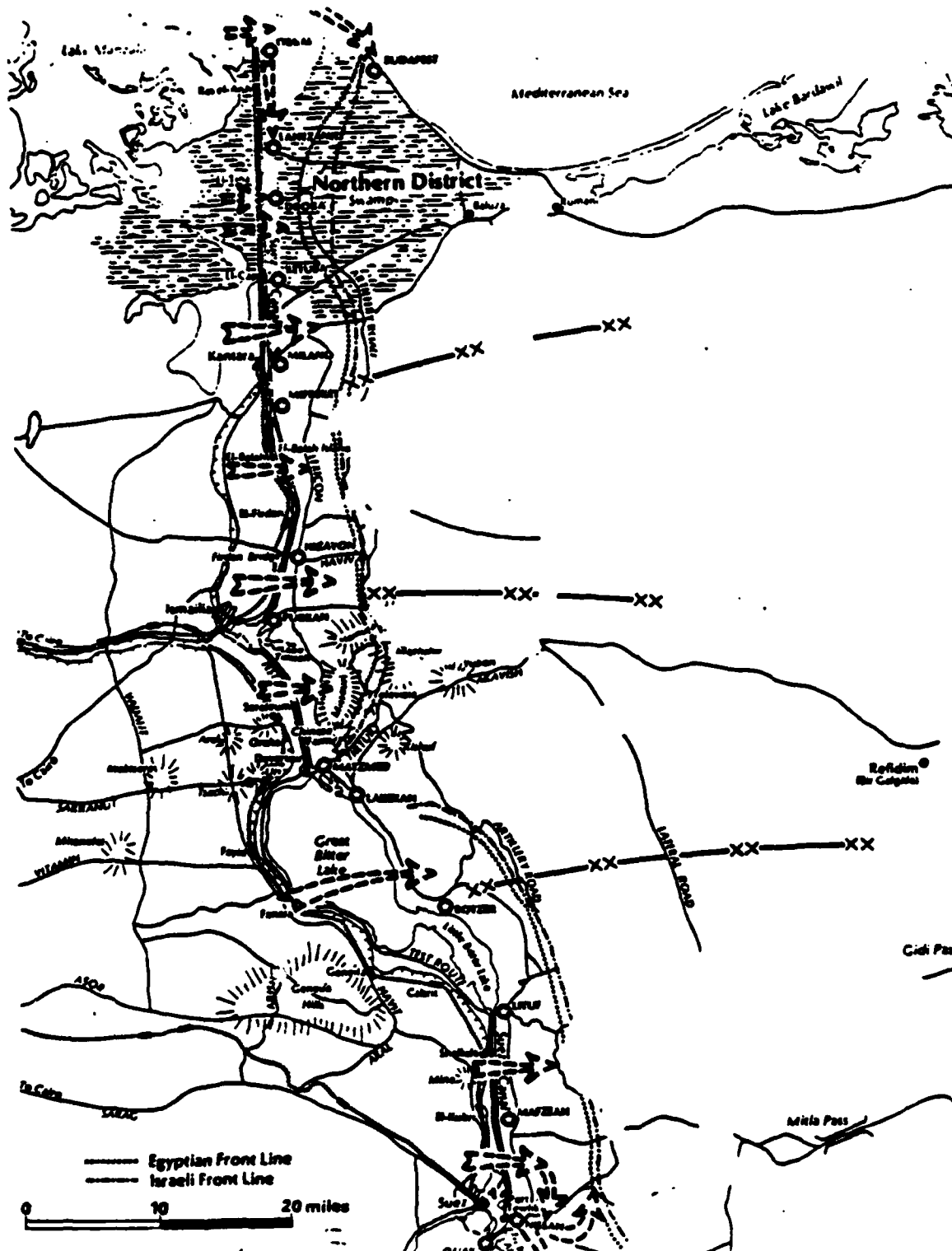
At 1400, 6 October, 240 Egyptian planes crossed the Suez Canal to strike three airfields in the Sinai, hit Israeli Hawk sites, and bomb Israeli command posts, radar stations, and artillery positions. Simultaneously 2,000 guns concentrated 3,000 tons of artillery ammunition on Israeli fortifications for fifty-three minutes.<sup>40</sup> By 1500 it was clear that the Egyptians were staging a major attack. By 1600 it was evident the Egyptians were conducting a major amphibious operation along the full length of the Canal. For two hours the Israeli's tried to identify the enemy's main effort, but noted only that the crossing was more successful in the northern sector of the Canal.<sup>41</sup>

As the Egyptian planners had anticipated, Israeli radio and television were not functioning on Yom Kippur, and it



was impossible to broadcast messages with mobilization codewords.<sup>42</sup> According to Trevor Depuy "The combination of thorough and efficient planning, careful security, the achievement of complete surprise, and highly efficient execution of carefully prepared plans, resulted in one of the most memorable water crossings in the annals of warfare."<sup>43</sup>

As a result, the Egyptians overcame the Israeli advantages of air superiority and technological ability. They did this by lulling the Israeli's into a state of laxity by conducting routine border exercises and then quickly launching a broad front attack on Israeli high value targets in the Sinai.



Map 8. The Sinai Invasion, 1973

## AFGHANISTAN 1979

The most recent example of operational surprise in a land campaign was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. After five years of refusing to commit to either block while accepting both US and Soviet foreign aid, President Sadar Mohammad Daud of Afghanistan was overthrown by communists on 27 April 1978. A Marxist government was formed immediately, placing Noor Mohammad Taraki as Prime Minister and Head of State, and Babrak Karmal and Hafizulah Amin as Deputy Prime Ministers. Over the next 18 months each of these Marxist leaders plotted to kill the other. During the summer of 1978, Taraki and Amin joined forces against Karmal and appointed him as ambassador to Czechoslovakia. Taraki and Amin then ordered extreme Marxist changes in Afghanistan which included new taxation, adopting atheism as government policy, and replacing the Afghan flag with a new hammer and sickle insignia. Popular revolt against these changes was immediate. As the situation worsened, the Soviets increased their presence in Afghanistan.<sup>44</sup>

In December 1978 the Soviet Union and Afghanistan signed a 20-year treaty for both military and economic cooperation. As a result, more Soviet civilian and military

advisors and sophisticated weaponry began to enter Afghanistan.<sup>45</sup> During the summer of 1979 both Taraki and Amin began to disagree on how to control the affairs of the country. Taraki was summoned to Moscow and allegedly discussed ways to eliminate Amin. However, upon Taraki's return to Kabul to organize a coup, Amin got word of the plot and made plans to escape. In September 1979 during the fumbled coup attempt, Taraki was killed by mistake. Amin immediately declared himself President and began to apply ruthless measures throughout the country. As a result, Afghan Army desertions increased, while guerilla freedom fighters grew stronger and ambushed Soviet advisors at random.

For the Soviets, it appeared that Afghanistan was beginning to slip away. Consequently, the Soviets saw three options: stay with Amin, remove him and hope for a better successor, or remove him and set up a puppet government.<sup>46</sup> Soviet diplomacy worked diligently to isolate Afghanistan politically and militarily, and, in particular, to prevent a rescue effort by the West. Amin's standing with the Soviets continued to decline until the Soviets finally considered removing him.<sup>47</sup>

Having isolated Afghanistan, the Soviet leaders planned to launch a military coup. Since the purpose of the coup was to depose of the existing leadership, the Afghan capital

city was the primary target for military action. Provided that Kabul could be quickly seized, the change of leadership could be effected quickly and easily.<sup>48</sup>

On 27 December 1979, the Soviet Union mounted its invasion of Afghanistan initially using nine divisions--two airborne and seven mechanized/armored divisions. The offensive focused on the capital of Kabul, other main cities and the strategic roads.<sup>49</sup> The 66th and 357th Motorized Rifle Divisions crossed the frontier in the northwest to seize Herat while the 201st and 306th Divisions invaded from the north through Termez and Sher Khan. Air support to ground maneuver units was provided by MIG 21's and MIG 23's. Airborne forces landed at Kabul and seized key points, isolated the Amin government, and neutralized the remainder of the Afghan Army resistance. Soviet troops surrounded the presidential palace and killed President Amin in a firefight. Almost immediately a broadcast was made by Babrak Karmal. Karmal announced Amin's overthrow and his own seizure of the presidency. It included an invitation to the Soviets to enter Afghanistan to help stabilize the situation.<sup>50</sup>

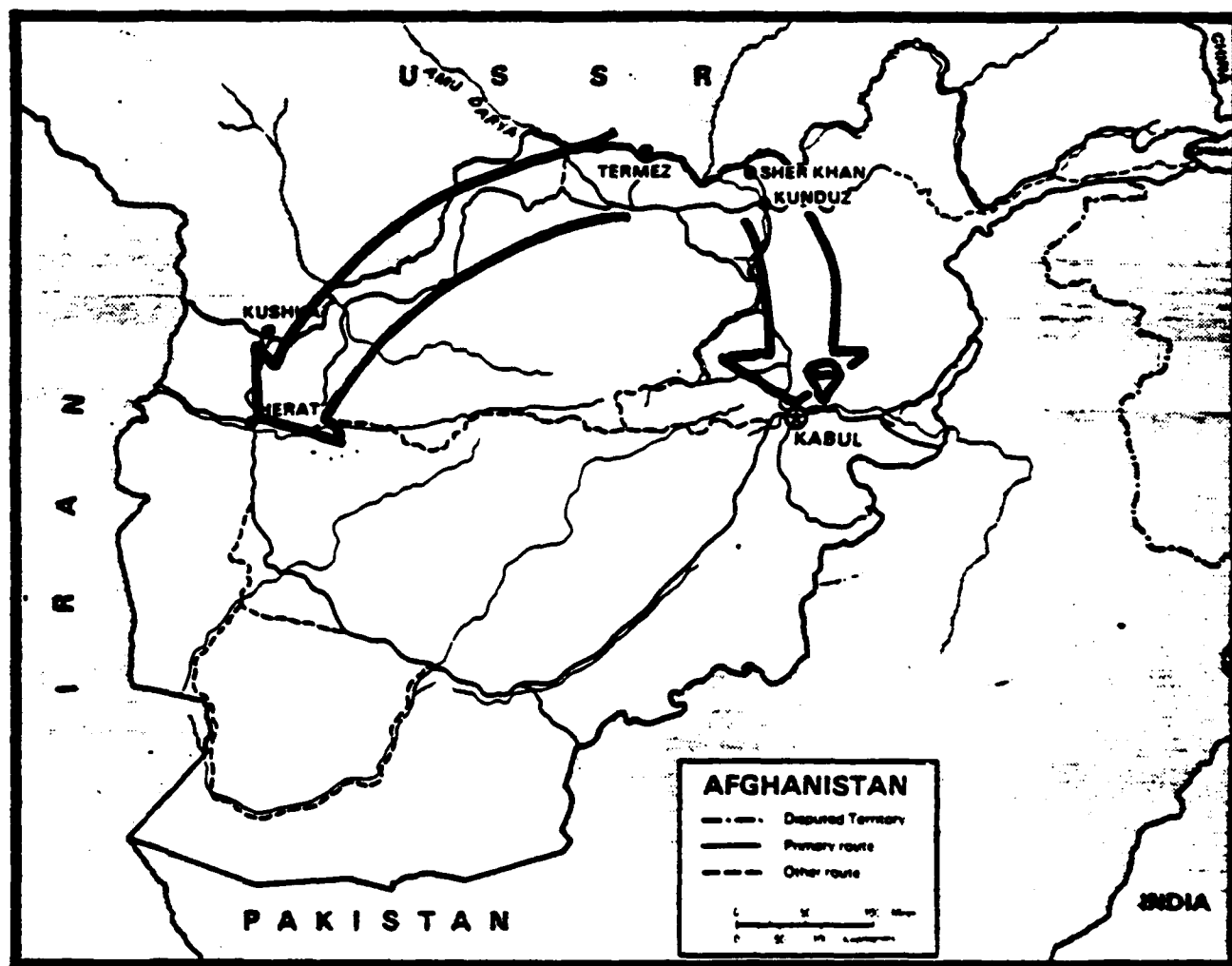
The Afghan armed forces, probably one of the world's most poorly paid, proved no match for the invading Soviets.<sup>51</sup> Even before the Soviets conducted the invasion, Russians were actively involved in the Afghan

armed forces. The Afghan armed forces were supplied and trained by the Soviet Union. A former major in the Afghan Army claimed that "Russian advisers were attached to every unit of the army, piloted most of the aircraft and manned most of the heavy artillery."<sup>52</sup> All their primary equipment was made in the Soviet Union. Key Afghan military systems included 170 combat aircraft, 200 T34 and 500 T54/55 tanks, 400 armored personnel carriers and 900 guns and heavy mortars.<sup>53</sup>

Soviet surprise in Afghanistan was achieved by a combination of factors. First, the divisions used for the invasion by road were comparatively low-grade Category C divisions rather than first rate Category A units. With no Category A divisions near the Afghan frontier, the Soviets hoped, according to P. H. Vigor, that an invasion of Afghanistan would not appear likely. This was the first means of securing surprise. On 18 December these Category C divisions were alerted and secretly mobilized. Ten days later, on 28 December, they had completed their mobilization and had already crossed the border into Afghanistan. The speed with which airborne and ground forces took their assigned objectives was the second means of securing surprise for the Soviets.<sup>54</sup> The third means of securing surprise was directed at the Western world. Fortuitous or not, the Soviets chose the Christmas holidays to attack

Afghanistan. American and European attention was dominated by the holidays, the pending American election campaign, and the plight of American hostages in Teheran.<sup>55</sup>

The Soviet invasion was handled extremely well. Airborne forces quickly seized the correct targets while ground forces in coordination with air support moved in rapidly and occupied their assigned objectives. Again, according to P.H. Vigor, "...surprise, that major Soviet military virtue, was secured."<sup>56</sup>



Map 9. The Afghanistan Invasion, 1979



## FINDINGS

The theoretical summary in Chapter 2 identified five primary factors which allow the attacker to achieve surprise. These included the use of unexpected time, place and manner of attack (ways), and deception and speed (means). Three historical case studies undertaken during the period 1944 to 1950 were examined and revealed that most of these factors had been instrumental in successfully achieving surprise. In Chapter 3, four modern case studies covering the period 1968 to 1979 were examined. There is evidence in a number of the modern campaigns that attacking in unexpected time, place, or manner can still deny an enemy the ability to react successfully. The Tet offensive was conducted at an unexpected time during the Tet holiday, and was widely dispersed at nearly every city, town and major military base throughout South Vietnam. The Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia when world interest had begun to relax as a result of two summit meetings between the Soviets and Czechs and when the Soviet troops departed from a border exercise while the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany (GSFG) stayed in their barracks. The Egyptians attacked Israel on the Yom Kippur/Ramadan holiday and attacked on a broad front across the Suez Canal. Finally, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan using low grade Category C units at an unexpected time only

one year after the Soviet Union and Afghanistan had signed a 20 year treaty for both military and economic cooperation.

There is also evidence in all the modern campaigns that the use of deception and rapid movement can still deny an enemy the ability to react successfully. Soldiers during the Tet offensive secretly and quickly moved ammunition and supplies outside major urban centers to launch their nation wide attack. Soviets used the completion of a border exercise near Czechoslovakia and speed of movement into the capital of Prague initially with Aeroflot civilian airplanes to take Czechoslovakian forces by surprise. The Egyptians conducted border exercises over several years prior to rapidly launching an invasion deep into the Sinai before Israeli mobilized forces could effectively respond. And finally, the Soviets conducted border exercises near Afghanistan before quickly launching an airborne invasion into the capital of Kabul and rapid ground invasion along strategic roads.

## SURPRISE AT THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL OF WAR

	<u>TET</u>	<u>CZECH</u>	<u>SINAI</u>	<u>AFGHAN</u>
<u>WAYS</u>				
Time	X	X	X	X
Place	X	X		X
Manner	X	X	X	X
<u>MEANS</u>				
Deception	X	X	X	X
Speed	X	X	X	X

Figure 2. Modern Case Study Comparison

The summary in Figure 2 provides a comparison of the five factors of surprise with the four modern case studies. As was the situation with the historical case studies, the modern case studies likewise identified most of these factors as being instrumental in successfully achieving surprise.

### CHAPTER 3 ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Don Oberdorfer, Tet! (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971), p. ix.

<sup>2</sup>Oberdorfer, Tet!, p. 116.

<sup>3</sup>Oberdorfer, Tet!, p. 70.

<sup>4</sup>Oberdorfer, Tet!, p. 52.

<sup>5</sup>Oberdorfer, Tet!, p. 75.

<sup>6</sup>Oberdorfer, Tet!, p. 120.

<sup>7</sup>Oberdorfer, Tet!, p. 121

<sup>8</sup>Oberdorfer, Tet!, p. 158.

<sup>9</sup>Bruce Palmer, 25-Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), p. 75.

<sup>10</sup>Oberdorfer, Tet!, p. 185-186.

<sup>11</sup>Peter Braestrup, Big Story (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 119.

<sup>12</sup>Palmer, 25-Year War, p. 78.

<sup>13</sup>Braestrup, Big Story, p. 119.

<sup>14</sup>Braestrup, Big Story, p. 145.

<sup>15</sup>Oberdorfer, Tet!, p. 251-252.

<sup>16</sup>Oberdorfer, Tet!, p. 256.

<sup>17</sup>Palmer, 25-Year War, p. 79.

<sup>18</sup>P.H. Vigor, Soviet Blitzkrieg Theory (New York: St Martin's Press, 1983), p. 132.

<sup>19</sup>Vigor, Soviet Blitzkrieg Theory, p. 131.

<sup>20</sup>Vigor, Soviet Blitzkrieg Theory, p. 135.

<sup>21</sup>Vigor, Soviet Blitzkrieg Theory, p. 134.

- <sup>22</sup>Vigor, Soviet Blitzkrieg Theory, p. 133.
- <sup>23</sup>Vigor, Soviet Blitzkrieg Theory, p. 136.
- <sup>24</sup>Vigor, Soviet Blitzkrieg Theory, p. 137.
- <sup>25</sup>Vigor, Soviet Blitzkrieg Theory, p. 135.
- <sup>26</sup>Chaim Herzog, The War of Atonement: October 1973 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1975), p. 2.
- <sup>27</sup>Herzog, War of Atonement, p. 7.
- <sup>28</sup>Herzog, War of Atonement, p. 8.
- <sup>29</sup>Herzog, War of Atonement, p. 9.
- <sup>30</sup>Trevor Depuy, Elusive Victory (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1978), p. 286.
- <sup>31</sup>Depuy, Elusive Victory, p. 292.
- <sup>32</sup>Herzog, War of Atonement, p. 28.
- <sup>33</sup>Depuy, Elusive Victory, p. 286.
- <sup>34</sup>Depuy, Elusive Victory, p. 288.
- <sup>35</sup>Saad El Shazly, The Crossing of the Suez (San Francisco: American Mideast Research, 1980), p. 24-25.
- <sup>36</sup>Shazly, Crossing the Suez, p. 26-27.
- <sup>37</sup>Herzog, War of Atonement, p. 37.
- <sup>38</sup>Shazly, Crossing the Suez, p. 206.
- <sup>39</sup>Shazly, Crossing the Suez, p. 207.
- <sup>40</sup>Herzog, War of Atonement, p. 151.
- <sup>41</sup>Herzog, War of Atonement, p. 150.
- <sup>42</sup>Depuy, Elusive Victory, p. 296.
- <sup>43</sup>Depuy, Elusive Victory, p. 300.
- <sup>44</sup>Lawrence E. Grinter, "The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan," Parameters (December, 1982), p. 55-57.

<sup>45</sup>M. Afzal Khan, "With the Afghan Rebels," New York Times Magazine (13 January 1980), p. 37.

<sup>46</sup>Grinter, "Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan," p. 55-57.

<sup>47</sup>Vigor, Soviet Blitzkrieg Theory, p. 138.

<sup>48</sup>Vigor, Soviet Blitzkrieg Theory, p. 139.

<sup>49</sup>Edgar O'Ballance, "Soviet Tactics in Afghanistan," Military Review (December, 1980), p. 48.

<sup>50</sup>Grinter, "Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan," p. 58.

<sup>51</sup>Khan, "With the Afghan Rebels," p. 50.

<sup>52</sup>Khan, "With the Afghan Rebels," p. 51.

<sup>53</sup>O'Ballance, "Soviet Tactics in Afghanistan," p. 46.

<sup>54</sup>Vigor, Soviet Blitzkrieg Theory, p. 140.

<sup>55</sup>Vigor, Soviet Blitzkrieg Theory, p. 141.

<sup>56</sup>Vigor, Soviet Blitzkrieg Theory, p. 140.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 established one primary and two supporting thesis questions. This led to research in order to better understand the underlying theoretical ideas and the historical and modern record concerning the achievement of surprise. After the research material was obtained, the historical and theoretical evidence was compared and contrasted in Chapters 2 and 3 in order to arrive at tentative conclusions. Chapter 4 will now return to the primary and supporting thesis questions proposed in Chapter 1 in order to provide insights about how surprise can be achieved today at the operational level of war.

The theory of surprise was drawn from the writings of both classical and contemporary theorists. The collection of theoretical ideas that were analyzed provided assertions about the desirable effects of surprise and various ways and means to achieve those effects. Military theorists discuss two desirable effects of achieving surprise against the enemy. The first effect is physical dislocation which results from the enemy failing to balance his forces properly to receive the friendly attack. For example, friendly forces strike enemy weaknesses preempting his

ability to strike back. The second effect of achieving surprise against the enemy is psychological paralysis. It delays enemy reactions, causes confusion, and induces psychological shock in enemy soldiers and leaders. Next, military theorists suggest three primary ways to achieve surprise against an enemy. The first of these ways is to attack at an unexpected time when the enemy is totally unaware or before he makes preparations to meet the attack. The second is to attack an enemy at an unexpected place by striking at a weak point or from an inconvenient direction. The third is to attack an enemy in an unexpected manner by using unexpected fighting techniques or unexpected weapons. Finally, military theorists identify two primary means to achieve surprise. The first means is the use of deception. An attacking force must deliberately mislead or misinform the enemy in order to conduct movement not just in secrecy but in unanticipated directions. The second means is the use of speed. This requires swift movement of attacking forces along the routes of advance.

The theory of surprise, then, identified five primary factors used to achieve surprise--time, place, and manner of attack, deception, and speed. Three case studies of campaigns and major operations undertaken during the period 1944 to 1950 were examined for evidence of these factors. The use of an unexpected time of attack was a factor for



achieving surprise in two studies. In the first case, Manchuria, surprise was achieved by attacking at an unexpected time during the rainy season. In the second, Inchon, a landing was made during a limited period of high tides. The use of an unexpected place of attack was a factor in achieving surprise during Cobra, in Manchuria, and at Inchon. Evidence of the use of an unexpected place of attack included attacking through terrain favoring the defense during Cobra, through "impassable" mountains in Manchuria, and deep into the rear to cut extended supply lines at Inchon. The use of an unexpected manner of attack was also a factor in all three historical case studies. Examples of unexpected manner included the use of "carpet bombing" in the Cobra breakout, attacking along multiple axes rather than the expected single route into Manchuria, and use of an "impossible" amphibious assault landing at Inchon. Deception was used in two of the case studies. During Normandy, the allies used a dummy army group with phony radio nets and a mock-up invasion fleet in order to allow allied forces to buildup along the Normandy beachhead. In Manchuria, the Soviets used deployment at night to move units secretly to assembly areas near the western border while maintaining normal buildup along the eastern border. Speed of movement was a factor used to achieve surprise in all three historical case studies. In

Cobra, speed of movement developed and exploited the penetration that took advantage of the surprise effect of "carpet bombing." Speed of movement during Manchuria allowed attacking forces to concentrate on enemy weak points. And during Inchon speed of movement allowed attacking forces to cut deep into extended enemy supply lines before the enemy could react.

Evidence found in the three historical case studies provided a tentative validation for the theoretical framework of surprise. This framework was then compared to four case studies of more contemporary campaigns and major operations undertaken during the period 1968 to 1979. Examples during the historical case studies included the use of an unexpected time of attack during adverse weather and during a short period of time for high tide. A characteristic unique to the modern case studies was timing the attack during a period when the defender could be expected or influenced to be somewhat relaxed. The use of an unexpected place of attack during the historical case studies included attacking through terrain favoring the defense at Cobra, "impassable" mountains in Manchuria, and into the rear of enemy forces at Inchon. The modern case studies emphasized surprise attacks conducted in capital cities in order to eliminate the key leaders thereby decapitating the political/military leadership. Choosing an

unexpected manner of attack in the historical as well as the modern case studies resulted most frequently in attacking along multiple axes of advance. Masking troop buildup was used as a means of deception in both historical and modern case studies. However, evidence was found in three modern case studies--Czechoslovakia, Sinai, and Afghanistan--where border exercises were used to portray false starts prior to the attack. In each case, forces conducted exercises along the border for extended periods of time until the enemy was perceived to be relaxed at which time the attack was quickly launched. Finally, the use of speed as a means to achieve surprise was used effectively in all historical and modern case studies. In all cases speed was critical to allow attacking forces to concentrate in order to catch the enemy off balance. Airborne assaults were used successfully in two modern case studies to move attacking forces into capital cities quickly. Ground forces moved along strategic roads in coordination with air movement. Earlier in this paper it was stated that today surprise is more difficult to achieve due to modern surveillance means. It is important to note that the modern case studies do not substantiate this thought. Users of sophisticated modern surveillance systems tend to become relaxed when observing routine exercises or the repetition of established patterns.

In summary, the primary thesis question can now be

answered. The evidence in this paper supports the conclusion that surprise can be achieved today at the operational level of war by various combinations of attacking at an unexpected time, at an unexpected place and in an unexpected manner using the means of deception and speed. More specifically, surprise attacks must be timed during a period when the defender is relaxed, in a direction that is inconvenient to the defender, using unexpected weapons and tactics, masking troop buildup through deception, and using speed of movement along ground and air routes in order to concentrate attacking forces. Military forces who are outnumbered and who desire to achieve decisive victory must use surprise skillfully in order to achieve the operational advantage. Finally, surprise was defined earlier in this paper as attacking unexpectedly. However, based on analysis of the information presented above, the basic definition of surprise should be modified. Surprise, therefore, must be redefined as attacking unexpectedly to preempt a reaction or force a reaction that can be exploited.

Although not within the scope of this study, the relationship between political surprise and military surprise is an area recommended for further research. Evidence of Soviet/communist attacks in three modern case studies--Tet 1968, Czechoslovakia 1968, and Afghanistan

1979--provided examples which argue that political surprise has a significant impact on achieving military surprise. In each of these case studies, political surprise was achieved during a period when the Western world was preoccupied or somewhat relaxed. In the first case study, the communist Tet offensive in 1968 was conducted during a US presidential election year when the American political system was most vulnerable. In the second case study, the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968 at the end of the second summit meeting when the West believed that Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union had reconciled their differences. And, in the third case study the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979 only one year after the Soviet Union and Afghanistan signed a 20 year treaty for military and economic cooperation. Finally, in all three of these modern case studies priority was placed on attacking capital cities in order to eliminate the key leaders in order to decapitate the political/military leadership. In conclusion, these ideas provide a basis for further research of political surprise and its impact on achieving military surprise.

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